

PROPHETIC ACTIVISM: BRIDGING THE GAP FROM ADOLESCENCE TO
ADULTHOOD THROUGH SPIRITUAL MENTORSHIP FOR BLACK
YOUTH IN FRANKLIN TOWNSHIP

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ABSTRACT

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by
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This project's context involves the Franklin Township community in Somerset, New Jersey. The problem present in this context is that there is no spiritual mentoring program that seeks to address high school graduates who have not chosen the military or college as they transition into adulthood. If Franklin Township's Black youth receive Christian spiritual mentorship, then Franklin's Black youth will be prepared to transition into adulthood while circumventing societal distractions and pressures. This project explored the work of prophetic activism. Data was collected utilizing pre and post questionnaires, interviews, focus group, observations, reflections, evaluation, and feedback questionnaires for each session.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I must acknowledge all of those who have been my greatest advocates, supporters, and cheerleaders. To my husband, Walter “Bernie” Jackson, Jr, my daughters, Tiana Joy, Jasmine Monique, and Chloe Alexandra Jackson, my parents, family, extended family, church family, friends, mentors, coaches, community leaders, prayer warriors, and spiritual leaders, I thank you for empowering me to see this dream come true. May God bless you exceedingly abundantly above all that you can think or imagine. I love you always and forever throughout eternity.

DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to those who dare to dream. God has not forgotten you.

ABBREVIATIONS

AME	African Methodist Episcopal
BCE	Before Common Era
BLM	Black Lives Matter Movement
CRT	Critical Race Theory
DST	Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated
FHS	Franklin High School
FNBBC	First New Birth Baptist Church
FTBOE	Franklin Township Board of Education
IAM	Interfaith Action Movement
IRB	Institutional Review Board
IT	Information Technology
JCSU	Johnson C. Smith University
KJV	King James Version
LJM	Liberative Justice Ministries
NAACP	National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
NASV	New American Standard Version
NCNW	National Council of Negro Women
NJCF	New Jersey Communities Forward
NJDOE	New Jersey Department of Education

NJISJ	New Jersey Institute for Social Justice
NJSLA	New Jersey Student Learning Assessment
NKJV	New King James Version
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
NSU	Norfolk State University
OGE	Operation Great Expectation
ORM	Organizational Management
P4Y	Passion 4 Youth, Inc.
RTS	Road To Success Alternative High School
SAT	Scholastic Aptitude Test
SIPP	Survey of Income and Program Participation
UTS	United Theological Seminary
YMCA	Young Men's Christian Association

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.

—The Gospel of St. Luke 4:18

INTRODUCTION

There is powerful satisfaction in fulfilling a dream, especially a dream that was supposed to be deferred. This doctoral program has proven to be an exhilarating process that has affirmed the need to continue to do ministry and carry the good news of the cross to the community. Aspirations to be a doctor of the church as well as a powerful gospel preacher, influential community advocate, strong community activist, and humble Christian servant have come to pass. United Theological Seminary has sufficiently prepared me to continue the soul-saving work as a prophetic activist under the tutelage and learning of the Reverend Doctor D. Anthony Everett with my colleagues in the cohort — Prophetic Activism: From the Cross to the Community.

The project that was birthed out of this doctoral program is fulfilling a direct need to minister to the hearts and minds of young people who need to effectively transition from their adolescence years into adulthood with support and mentorship from community leaders who care. The process in this doctoral program that was required to understand the direct needs of the community served this project well and enhances the impact that will continue to be made in the years to come. There has been a robust exploration of study, examination, research, and reading to properly implement this project in Franklin Township (Somerset in Somerset County), New Jersey. The rigor and study involved to develop this ministry and community program as well as to understand the proper context of the ministry work are detailed in the following chapters.

Chapter one, Ministry Focus, offers a reflection of my ministry context, ministry journey, and mission field — Franklin Township of Somerset, New Jersey. The professional leadership skills and lived experiences combined with the context analysis work completed in this doctoral program led to the birth of this project in Franklin Township. This critical analysis required in depth soul work as well as a structured approach to research while exploring prophetic activism. The ultimate outcome is to fortify this voice in prophetic activism while advocating for social change and faith-based transformation in Franklin Township.

Chapter two, Biblical Foundations, is a thorough examination of God's wisdom literature in Proverbs 22:1-16.¹ There are three major themes of this text explored, which are the importance of the community's ancestral source of wisdom, character development and spiritual formation, and advancing God's transforming presence into the next generation of spiritual socially responsible citizens. The traditions and cultures of the Israelites promoted the sage advice and ancestral wisdom for the next generation of youth to ensure economic empowerment, financial stability, and social responsibility to advance the community. Character development and spiritual formation were a part of the fundamental teachings of the Israelites to bridge the gap to ensure their youth became productive economically, spiritually, and socially. God's transforming presence is revealed through the sage advice, oral traditions, and divine insights shared by the Israelites in their individual homes and community overall as wisdom for practical everyday life.

¹ Proverbs 22:1-16, New Revised Standard Version. Unless otherwise noted, all scripture references in this document are from the NRSV.

The wisdom literature in Proverbs promotes social holiness and social action. The Israelites focused on community and therefore worked hard to raise morally conscious and civically minded young adults within the family unit. Consequently, this project critically examined the community development of Franklin's youth. This Biblical Foundation passage build upon the moral foundation and spiritual foundation necessary to produce spiritually and socially minded citizens in Franklin. This Biblical Foundation promotes justice, righteousness, holiness, and equitable treatment of all humankind. The Israelite community decided on the collective wisdom for their society, qualities necessary to succeed, and how best their youth should navigate their world; and in turn, this project has gained insight from this biblical passage to do the same.

Chapter three, Historical Foundation, is the focus for this project that examined the Reconstruction Era. History is a great perspective to study to ensure that a community models what worked well and then remember the lessons learned in those past experiences that did not work as well. African Americans during the Reconstruction Era built a sense of community, culture, and success that this project will model. The transition from being enslaved to emancipated with a sense of free agency left many at a loss. However, the power of the Black community forged ahead and instilled a sense of purpose, a stable life, and good standing for those who wanted more for themselves and their families despite the inequitable obstacles and racist challenges they had to endure, namely the Black Codes and Jim Crow laws that were quickly implemented to marginalize and oppress this formative community.

This project is more informed based on the many lessons studied from this Reconstruction Era. There is power in the Black community, in the nation, and in New

Jersey. Despite the original sin of white supremacy acted out through the oppressive nature of slavery as a form of capitalism, Blacks in this country understood the importance of communal power and worked hard to build community with the family at its core. The moral and religious outlook always included community-based collaboration; and the Black church served as the heartbeat of the community as they fought passionately for equality. There was synergy from civic, church, and community leaders to create cultural, educational, social, civic, economic, and political opportunities to build and maintain success. The community worked together to ensure knowledge sharing was provided to gain skills, promote racial unity, advance racial progress, offer economic self-help, and push political gains to be a productive member of society. Civic, moral, and social responsibilities were encouraged in the community during the Reconstruction Era. As it was in this historical moment, this project remains optimistic about the human possibilities as uplifted, liberated people and valuable contributors to society.

Chapter four, Theological Foundation, primarily centered in the liberating power of God. The examination of Black liberation theology, womanism and the hermeneutic of powerful social movements, namely The Black Lives Matter Movement, shape the liberating power and presence of God in one's life and pushes this project to accept limitless possibilities and to reimagine a new community, to reimagine a new society, and to reimagine a new future. This theological foundation serves to advocate for civic and social change; these are the underpinnings for this project.

God's desire for the liberation of Black people in America is deeply embedded within the souls of Black America that racial oppression, which at its root, is white

supremacy, and the overtures of inferiority are no longer acceptable and tolerable. These social movements were birthed to affect transformational change and transformative justice. The first social movement began during the Reconstruction Era, then again during the Civil Rights Era, and now with the Black Lives Matter Era. The Black community is ready for social transformation, and affirming voices are welcome to renew and strengthen the weak and downtrodden. This project affirms to the youth that regardless of their decisions, they are agents of change, they have divine worth, and God's ethos of love towards them is unconditional.

Black liberation theologians and womanist theologians have exuded wisdom and preached the need for human liberation to ensure that Black people provide strong and real contributions to society. Womanist thought was fundamental in offering lived experiences, wisdom, culture, creativity, power, and strength for all social movements in the Black community because women have always played a strong role in community transformation. This project endows Franklin's youth with the same creativity, wisdom, and liberating power to exercise their own sense of agency and reimagine their role in the community and society overall. This prophetic edge of transformation fortifies the voices in Franklin Township and empowers them to tell their stories and recreate and reimagine new stories for their lives as they transition into adulthood knowing God is on their side. This theological foundation informs this project in a way that Franklin's youth can form a social ethos that is full of purpose, grounded in faith, spiritual virtue, and a real connection to God and community because Black lives matter to God.

Chapter five, Interdisciplinary Foundations, informs the project using Critical Race Theory within a sociological framework to understand how Black communities are

formed and shaped amid systems of racism and oppression as dominant forces. This Interdisciplinary foundation bridges the gap between a sociological imagination and a transformational change in Franklin.

These concepts and tenets of Critical Race Theory are necessary to understand because of the persistent racial inequality that is systemic and oppressive forces that are deeply embedded in the fabric of American society. Structures of domination are permanent and will remain as a blemish on American culture. However, the sociological framework through the lens of Critical Race Theory offers opportunities to create counter narratives and recreate and share new stories that will rightly inform this diverse American society.

Despite these challenges of the dominant culture, this project implemented a holistic approach to give a true sense of agency to Franklin's youth so they will know their voice and use their voice for transformational change. Despite the social hierarchy, race in social life, and communities of color being viewed in subordinate roles, the use of critical thinking skills and a desire for social change reinforces the ethical commitment to be a prophetic activist and organize for justice and social change in new innovative ways. Despite racism being embedded in social thoughts and societal structures, this project properly equips and prepares Franklin's Black youth for their transition into these societal norms and practices with a sense of empowerment and agency.

Sociology evaluates communities and looks at people's experiences, values, and evidence to build a body of knowledge. Critical Race Theory keeps communities grounded in the realities of systemic racism and systematic oppression yet pushes for community activism and a desired state that is equitable, just, and real. This scholarship

is grounded in theory and praxis; and therefore, the tools, methods, processes, and theory enhance and substantiate the praxis for this project. When sharing stories, relationships are formed, human oppression is dismantled, and bridges are built. The result enables communities to truly see and hear each other. Communities will be able to see every soul, and therefore, see everyone's humanity. Community success is built on many societal frameworks such as family, community, church, school, and civic organizations, which are fundamental in the proper development of the younger generation. This project challenges the status quo, promotes change, and supports a promising future for Franklin's young adults with meaning and purpose that fortifies their souls and enriches their lives. This project is designed to enhance their contribution to the Franklin community with their talents and skills fully equipped to transform and change the community for the better.

Chapter six, Project Analysis, highlights the project and details the implementation and outcome of the project. This final chapter offers a summary of the project proposal, the approach used, the project methodology, project implementation, data collection, and analysis. This chapter also details the support and negation of the hypothesis. The content of the six-week lesson plans and presentation materials will be outlined. An overview of the stakeholder analysis, participant analysis, and the contributions of the context and professional associates in the implementation of this project, will also be included. Based on research observations, an examination of the replicability, generalizability, and transferability will be explored. Additionally, a summary of learning that highlights the project's future needs, improvements, and lessons learned are examined through the lens of prophetic activism within the context of

the historical, biblical, theological, and interdisciplinary research. At the conclusion of this analysis, reflections about this doctoral journey, ministry impacts, and community impacts are contemplated as well as important next steps to continue to move this project forward in the Franklin Township community.

At the conclusion of careful research, this project is needed in Franklin Township. The community leaders who participated in this project agree that more resources and attention are required to meet this need in the community. The research reveals a true, authentic need to meet the needs of recent high school graduates to find and build their own community. There is a direct need to support Franklin's young adults as they bridge the gap between their adolescence into adulthood. This Christian spiritual mentorship program has proven to support their life journey. This empowerment program will continue with the direct support and encouragement from Franklin's community leaders and this ministry. As a result of this project, opportunities to expand the ministry work at the First New Birth Life Enrichment Center is a benefit to my ministry context and my personal ministry work. This doctoral program at United Theological Seminary has empowered me to expand these possibilities, and I have a greater vision that only God can bless.

CHAPTER ONE

MINISTRY FOCUS

Introduction

The community I am commissioned to serve is Franklin Township of Somerset, New Jersey. The people I serve are the youth and their families in the Franklin Township community. As a prophetic preacher and a prophetic activist advocating for social holiness, I desire to embolden the youth of Franklin Township. As a prophetic activist, I am eager to advance their level of confidence assuring them of their divine purpose through meaningful purpose-driven activities. As a prophetic preacher, I desire to speak life into the youth and to empower them not only with personal holiness but also with social holiness.

There are youth in Franklin Township who need more direction and guidance after graduating from high school because a college education was not their next step for various reasons. Developing, in collaboration with Franklin Township's adult citizens, a youth leadership conference or youth summit with a training forum to support their transition from high school to working citizens who did not choose college as their path, will be the bridge into adulthood as active healthy citizens understanding their social and civic responsibilities. I assert that if the youth of Franklin Township embrace the skills, tools, and knowledge to be productive, socially conscious, and civically minded citizens,

Franklin Township's youth will be emboldened with self-confidence and a greater understanding of the importance of social holiness.

Context

My home church is First New Birth Baptist Church located in Manassas, Virginia. This church has been focused on evangelism and mission work. The work that I have been called to do is to work in the mission field in my present context and location. Franklin Township is my mission field. My ministry focus will be based on the needs of those who live in Somerset, New Jersey. Pastor John Blackmon and the members of First New Birth fully support the need to expand ministry beyond Manassas, Virginia, because they hold the scripture close to their ministry call, which is to go, evangelize, and teach all nations.

New Jersey is a densely populated state where over eight million diverse people live either in northern, central, or south Jersey. New Jersey is considered the garden state with plenty of farmland, forestry, and beautiful landscapes. Somerset County is a large county in central New Jersey and there are many affluent areas that make up this county. The Township of Franklin is one of them. Franklin Township is a municipality made of many small villages in Somerset County.

Primary Ministry Station

The demographics of New Jersey, specifically Franklin Township, portray the amount of diversity in the state and the township. According to the U. S. Census Bureau,

as of July 1, 2019, the estimated total population in New Jersey is 8,882,190.¹ Based on the amount of land in New Jersey, a population of almost nine million residents is why it is considered a densely populated state. In Franklin Township, the total population is estimated at 65,642 in a forty-six-mile radius as of July 1, 2019.²

The U. S. Census Bureau defines the racial origin when reporting the percentages for each racial category. For this analysis of context, the racial percentages that were less than 2% were not noted as a major race in Franklin Township. Franklin Township's racial origin is made of Whites (35.2%), Blacks (28.1%), Asian (21.5%), and Hispanic/Latino (14%).³ The education level in Franklin Township reflects 94.3% with a high school diploma and 52.6% with a bachelor's degree or higher.⁴ This education level suggests that there are students who graduate in Franklin who are not on a college career path.

Colonial Somerset County has the second highest black population in New Jersey.⁵ Racial tensions from 1865 to 1965 were high between Whites and Blacks; but in Franklin Township, the Dutch farmers looked for solutions to deal with racial tensions and problems in the Franklin Community. They valued individualism and personal relationships because there was interdependency between the Whites and Blacks, which

¹ U. S. Census Bureau, "Quick Facts," (July 1, 2019), <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/NJ.US/PST045219>.

² U. S. Census Bureau, "Quick Facts," (July 1, 2019), <https://www.census.gov/quickfactsfact/table/NJ.US/PST045219#qf-headnote-a>.

³ U. S. Census Bureau, "Quick Facts," (July 1, 2019), <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/franklintownshipsomersetcountynewjersey.NJ.US/PST045219>.

⁴ U. S. Census Bureau, "QuickFacts," (July 1, 2019), <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/franklintownshipsomersetcountynewjersey.NJ.US/PST045219>.

⁵ William Brahms and the Franklin Township Public Library, *Images of America: Franklin Township* (Dover, NH: Arcadia Publishing, 1997), 110.

was no surprise that in 1894 there was no lynching, expulsions, or other extreme activities to socially isolate Blacks.⁶ This historic significance explains the camaraderie and willingness to celebrate diversity in the Franklin community. Furthermore, this history is relevant because Franklin is known for finding ways to resolve differences that naturally comes with the number of different residents in the community.

Franklin Township is a diverse community that was settled in the 1680s along the Raritan River by the Dutch, who formed the largest group of early township settlers, and they are still represented today with the Dutch architecture and the Dutch Reformed Church.⁷ Franklin Township was incorporated in 1798 as a municipality while the Dutch, French, and Germans immigrated to America for freedom from religious persecution.⁸ Eight villages make up Franklin Township; they are Franklin Park, Somerset, Griggstown, Kingston, Zarephath, Blackwells Mills, East Millstone, and Middlebush.⁹ Franklin Township has had a strong representation of Black people since the early 1700s as slave labor on the Dutch settlers' farms. After manumission, Black people who were enslaved people, stayed in this agricultural rich community and called Franklin their home.¹⁰

⁶ Brian Armstrong, *The Franklin Park Tragedy: A Forgotten Story of Racial Injustice in New Jersey* (Charleston, SC: History Press, 2019), 16.

⁷ Brahms, *Images of America*, 7.

⁸ Brahms, *Images of America*, 7.

⁹ Brahms, *Images of America*, 7.

¹⁰ Brahms, *Images of America*, 8.

In the twentieth century, Franklin started to move from agricultural to industrial and the population experienced a growth spurt after World War II.¹¹ New industrial parks were developed; companies such as AT&T, Merrill Lynch, and Federal Express resided in Franklin.¹² The Garden State Exhibit Center opened in 1990 and was used for state conventions, exhibitions, and political events.¹³ The Franklin Township Chamber of Commerce was established in the Spring of 1953 to establish the industrial development.¹⁴ The Franklin Township Chamber of Commerce continues to build up the industrial parks and corporate centers to build the economic infrastructure in Franklin and contribute to the taxes, which lessens the tax burden on Franklin residents.¹⁵ The historical structures and historical districts within Franklin remain on the National Historic Register and the New Jersey Historic Register, such as the Delaware and Raritan Canal Historic District, the Meadows, Rockingham, and the Six Mile Run Historic District.¹⁶

According to the U. S. Census Bureau, the median income from 2014 to 2018 for New Jersey is \$79,363 and the median income for Franklin Township is \$95,799.¹⁷ The

¹¹ Brahms, *Images of America*, 8.

¹² Brahms, *Images of America*, 8.

¹³ Brahms, *Images of America*, 8.

¹⁴ William Brahms, *Franklin Township, Somerset County, NJ: A History* (Pikesville, MD: Port City Press, Inc., 1998), 265.

¹⁵ William Grippo, "Interview," interviewed by Catina Blackmon Jackson, October 30, 2020.

¹⁶ Brahms, *Images of America*, 8.

¹⁷ U. S. Census Bureau, "Quick Facts," (July 1, 2019), <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/franklintownshipsomersetcountynewjersey.NJ.US/INC110218#INC110218>.

poverty level for New Jersey is 9.2% and Franklin Township is 5.8%.¹⁸ The median income for Franklin Township residents is higher and the poverty level is lower than the rest of the state of New Jersey.

There is a significant gap in the racial wealth in the state of New Jersey. According to an article written by the New Jersey Institute for Social Justice (NJISJ), using data from the 2014 Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP), the racial wealth gap is “shameful” and should be addressed for Black and Brown residents to gain financial stability and benefit from opportunities to create generational wealth.¹⁹ Unfortunately, there is limited financial security for the Black and Latino population in New Jersey. The New Jersey Institute for Social Justice defined the Black and Latino population when using these statistics as:

All results reveal statistically significant differences between white individuals compared to Black/Latina/Latino individuals. Results are presented for Black and Latina/Latino individuals jointly in order to increase confidence in estimates, although results retain statistical significance for Black and Latina/Latino New Jersey residents compared to white individuals in the state when Black and Latina/Latino residents are analyzed separately.²⁰

According to the New Jersey Institute for Social Justice, the median net worth is \$179 for Black and Latino compared to \$106,210 for Whites.²¹ The average white person in New Jersey is ten times wealthier than the average Black and Latino person with Whites’ mean

¹⁸ U. S. Census Bureau, “Quick Facts,” (July 1, 2019), <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/franklintownshipsomersetcountynewjersey.NJ.US/INC110218#INC110218>.

¹⁹ New Jersey Institute for Social Justice, “Black and Brown in New Jersey: The Garden State’s Shameful Racial Wealth Gap,” [https://d3n8a8pro7vbm.cloudfront.net/njisj/pages/689/ attachments/original/1603320237/Black_and_Brown_in_NJ_Final.pdf?1603320237](https://d3n8a8pro7vbm.cloudfront.net/njisj/pages/689/attachments/original/1603320237/Black_and_Brown_in_NJ_Final.pdf?1603320237).

²⁰ New Jersey Institute for Social Justice, “Black and Brown in New Jersey.”

²¹ New Jersey Institute for Social Justice, “Black and Brown in New Jersey.”

net worth totaling \$450,063 compared to Blacks and Latinos at \$48,080.²² The median annual income for Blacks and Latinos is \$20,040 compared to Whites totaling \$39,936 and the mean annual income averages Blacks and Latinos earning \$26,131 with Whites earning \$63,677.²³

Unfortunately, home ownership favors Whites in New Jersey also. Forty-two percent of Blacks and Latinos own homes compared to 84% of Whites owning homes in New Jersey.²⁴ Finally, the retirement savings is ten times greater for Whites than Blacks and Latinos with Whites' savings at \$84,876 compared to \$8,248 retirement savings for Blacks and Latinos.²⁵ These statistics are alarming when many Blacks and Latinos are trying to maintain a healthy and prosperous lifestyle in an expensive state.

Economic empowerment through wealth accumulation is a racial disparity in the state of New Jersey. Over 11,000 black owned businesses ranging from consumer services like barbershops and hair salons to financial services, banking, and technology firms provide a glimmer of hope.²⁶ Even though there is more “accumulated ancestral wealth in the white middle classes,” there is a “sizable black middle class” in the state of New Jersey that offers great economic promise despite the economic distress for many Blacks.²⁷ When Blacks wield their economic power, political power, electoral power, and

²² New Jersey Institute for Social Justice, “Black and Brown in New Jersey.”

²³ New Jersey Institute for Social Justice, “Black and Brown in New Jersey.”

²⁴ New Jersey Institute for Social Justice, “Black and Brown in New Jersey.”

²⁵ New Jersey Institute for Social Justice, “Black and Brown in New Jersey.”

²⁶ Graham Russell and Gao Hodges, *Black New Jersey: 1664 to the Present Day* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2018), 297.

²⁷ Russell and Hodges, *Black New Jersey*, 300.

grassroots activism in the state of New Jersey, there are no limits to the restorative justice that can be achieved.²⁸

Mass incarceration is also a concern for Black citizens in the state of New Jersey. New Jersey ranks as the thirty-ninth state in the country with an incarceration rate of 298 per 100,000 people where fifty-five percent of the male prisoners and forty-four percent of the female prisoners are Black.²⁹ Over 13,000 people are incarcerated in New Jersey.³⁰ In contrast, the next largest groups incarcerated are Whites where White females share the same percentages as Blacks, yet White males are only under twenty-six percent.³¹ The statistics that are most alarming are that thirty-five percent of prison inmates are young Black men within the ages of twenty-one to thirty years old.³²

The silver lining for the incarcerated in New Jersey is that upon completion of their term, ex-felons' voting rights are immediately restored, which is considered a more liberal policy than most other states in the country.³³ The sad news is that if a felon is placed on parole after their incarceration, then they cannot exercise their right to vote, which is held in high regard for New Jersey's incarcerated.³⁴ For example, in 2000, 2,720 felons were released and eligible to vote; but the 12,612 placed on parole did not have

²⁸ Russell and Hodges, *Black New Jersey*, 300.

²⁹ Russell and Hodges, *Black New Jersey*, 286.

³⁰ Russell and Hodges, *Black New Jersey*, 286.

³¹ Russell and Hodges, *Black New Jersey*, 286-287.

³² Russell and Hodges, *Black New Jersey*, 298.

³³ Russell and Hodges, *Black New Jersey*, 287.

³⁴ Russell and Hodges, *Black New Jersey*, 287.

their voting rights restored.³⁵ The most alarming fact is that Black New Jerseyans are only thirteen percent of the New Jersey population, yet they are fifty-five percent of the incarcerated; these convictions lead to broken families, evicted homes, single parenting, and destabilization of the communities.³⁶ This project will attempt to mitigate these issues in Franklin Township.

Franklin Township is often celebrated for having strong leaders, community advocates, and critical services and resources that are needed to uplift the community. There are a few entities in Franklin that provide those community resources. The Human Relations Commission fosters good will, collaboration, and cooperation between entities for the benefit of the community. The Youth Services Commission serves to “coordinate between local government, community agencies, schools, police, clergy and interested citizens to maximize prevention and provision of assistance to youth and their families.”³⁷

Franklin Township’s vision is compelling and reflects the essence of the school district, faith-based community, and government. The vision states,

Residents of the Township of Franklin will live and thrive in a community that values community pride and spirit, celebrates diversity and creates an environment that provides opportunities for all people so that they develop as healthy, caring, positive, educated, and responsible members of the community.³⁸

³⁵ Russell and Hodges, *Black New Jersey*, 287.

³⁶ Russell and Hodges, *Black New Jersey*, 287-288.

³⁷ Township of Franklin, New Jersey, “Franklin Township Youth Services Commission,” <https://www.franklintwpnj.org/government/boards-committees/youth-services>.

³⁸ Township of Franklin, New Jersey, “Mission and Vision,” <https://www.franklintwpnj.org/about-franklin/mission-and-vision>.

There is opportunity to reinforce spiritual, social, and civic engagement in the youth of Franklin Township.

Context for Project

Albeit a new entity in Franklin, The Franklin Township Community Youth Center, located at 429 Lewis Street in Somerset, will be the next wave of empowerment for the youth of Franklin. The mission and vision of the Franklin Township Youth Center is to “evolve from the youth and the overall community, serve the needs of the youth, and empower them to achieve greatness while making Franklin Township a better place to live.”³⁹ The Franklin Youth Initiative is another organization that promotes the well-being of teens by partnering with adults in Franklin on educational and recreational programs.⁴⁰ Franklin Township is working hard to diagnose and provide a solution on the challenges that youth face in this diverse community.

The diversity in Franklin Township is often celebrated as a source of pride and strength. However, sometimes the community does not understand everyone's culture and it can create conflict. Therefore, Franklin Township's strength is also Franklin's weakness. Franklin Township is now working to break the cycle of challenges our youth face in Franklin Township. The need is to work with families. Parents need more support. Homelessness is a real concern. Another challenge for the community is to figure out how to keep the youth engaged to avoid bad and/or criminal behavior. More youth

³⁹ Township of Franklin, New Jersey, “Franklin Township Community Youth Center,” <https://www.franklintwpnj.org/what-s-new/community-youth-center-planning-information>.

⁴⁰ Township of Franklin, New Jersey, “Franklin Youth Initiative,” <https://www.franklintwpnj.org/government/departments/recreation-and-parks/franklin-youth-initiative>.

activities, when school ends to develop leadership skills, and how to make wise decisions, would be helpful. Family support is important, and family support will certainly get to the root of the problem and provide solutions to keep the youth productive and engaged in healthy activities.

When discussing Franklin Township with the chairperson of the Human Relations Commission, Gary Rosenthal said that Franklin is a diverse township, and the goal of this commission is to,

keep everyone happy and it becomes hard when you have a lot of religious institutions and different people. Franklin Township is well known for being that type of community. We have an active community. We help with the schools and the census. We have a youth center. We are attempting to keep the teenagers off the streets.⁴¹

After a few severe crimes were committed in Franklin recently, community leaders, community advocates, educators, and faith-based leaders, are solutioning how best to positively impact our youth to avoid the New Jersey penal system.

In New Jersey, Black and Latino people are 30% of the population yet represent 80% of the prison population and most offenses are drug-related, which is higher than most other states.⁴² Unfortunately for New Jersey, people of color are imprisoned for nonviolent offenses and their youth represent 90% of those incarcerated.⁴³ There is a program called Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative that provides juvenile justice reform which is positioning itself to be a model for the nation.⁴⁴ Another program called

⁴¹ Gary Rosenthal, interview by Catina Blackmon Jackson, Somerset, New Jersey, October 29, 2020.

⁴² New Jersey Institute for Social Justice, *2016 NJISJ Annual Report*, 7, https://issuu.com/njisj/docs/new_jersey_institute_for_social_jus.

⁴³ New Jersey Institute for Social Justice, *2016 NJISJ Annual Report*, 7.

⁴⁴ New Jersey Institute for Social Justice, *2016 NJISJ Annual Report*, 8.

New Jersey Communities Forward (NJCF) is created to build relationships and increase positive collaboration with law enforcement and the communities they serve.⁴⁵

The youth in Franklin Township must be Franklin's focus. The parents of the youth must be the focus to give them the support and resources they need to allow their children the opportunities to be nurtured and to grow. Franklin's youth are warriors for life. The expectation is that the Franklin youth must succeed. Franklin Township has set up the infrastructure and resources that will benefit the youth.

Ministry Journey

Adult Years – Education and Professional Development

My first life decision was choosing Jesus Christ. College was the second adult decision required of me. I chose Hampton University, a historically black college and university because I wanted to imagine life without racism if only for four years in a lifetime. Additionally, the competitive advantage of learning with other Black scholars and growing in self-confidence and self-assuredness was a priceless experience. As a speech communication major, I learned critical skills, which included effective public speaking, improvisational speaking, and extemporaneous speaking. God used those skills in my college years to effectively do ministry work today.

My next phase in educational development included an opportunity to elevate my professional development. I obtained a Master of Arts in Education (MAE) degree in Corporate Human Resources Training and Development at Seton Hall University. After

⁴⁵ New Jersey Institute for Social Justice, *2016 NJISJ Annual Report*, 6.

obtaining this degree, I successfully moved from Operations in New York City to Information Technology (IT) in New Jersey. As an IT professional, I gained multiple certifications in training leadership, instructional design, and Information Technology. Yet God had greater ideas and plans for my educational development.

I had the fortunate opportunity to attend Drew University in pursuit of a Master of Divinity degree and a certificate in spiritual formation. I attended Drew Theological School full-time while working full time. I accepted my bi-vocational calling to be an IT professional and a trained, licensed, ordained preacher. I answered the call to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ in 2004. God opened the door for me to gain this educational enlightenment and professional training to be a competent minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ. A Master of Divinity degree solidified my confidence level and assured me that my calling was a professional call. These educational experiences make me who I am professionally. God has blessed me to be confident, secure, and sure in who I am with these educational experiences.

My professional development at its core is centered around moral courage, strong leadership, and transparent honest communication. Leadership and communication are my greatest divine gifts. I walk in this power and authority; and I move and operate without fear. I lead with confidence. I preach with boldness. I manage with courage. I minister with God's grace. The gift to lead, manage, and communicate well, which are inherent from my corporate experiences, empowers me to lead ministry work well. My spiritual gifts are praying, preaching, teaching, pastoring, chaplaincy, spiritual direction, and pastoral care.

The Calling and Ordination Track

The greatest ministry work is when many souls are reached, which requires effective collaboration with others in ministry and in the community. The challenge is to break through and build trust and momentum to restore, rejuvenate, and replenish the community with hope, resources, and a new way of being. Sound leadership, dealing with conflict, and continual feedback are the professional skills that affords me opportunities to observe effective ministry that empowers the community. The prayer is for God to grant the patience and grace to live a life of justice, loving kindness, and humility as my reasonable service in ordained ministry.

When I shared with my father, the Reverend John Edward Blackmon, Sr., God's divine revelation on my life, he said that "God does not call the qualified, but God qualifies the called."⁴⁶ I am called, and after extensive training and preparation, I am now qualified. I pursued the path of ordination to finalize the preparation process.

I was ordained in the African Methodist Episcopal Church, and I was ordained in the Baptist faith tradition. In 2008, I was ordained as a Local Deacon and in 2010 I was ordained as a Local Elder in the New Jersey Annual Conference of the First Episcopal District. After my theological training at Drew University, I shifted to the Baptist faith tradition and was licensed to preach in 2012 and ordained eight years later in 2020. By God's grace, I am an ordained clergyperson walking in my divine authority.

⁴⁶ This quote came about in a conversation with my father, the Reverend John Edward Blackmon, Sr., on a Sunday night in January 2005, which is the very same day that God called me to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Passion and Gifts for Ministry

At the age of nine I accepted Christ and my confidence is knowing that I am in a covenant relationship with God. My Black college experience empowered me with a strong sense of self-awareness and emboldened me to stand with self-assuredness and confidence because I stand on the shoulders of a long line of powerful ancestors. As a mother and wife, I am gifted with compassion, grace, and mercy to serve inside and outside the home. The spirit of excellence upon me shifted from producing perfect work in academia towards raising my family with inner beauty, Christian ethics, civility, Christian morality, human decency, and human kindness.

I am a spiritual leader who prays, preaches, teaches, pastors, and offers spiritual direction, chaplaincy, and pastoral care to anyone in need as my lifetime service in ordained ministry. These seven gifts inform my calling and ground me in the work of serving and ministering in the community. As a leader, I empower others through training, development, mentoring, and coaching. My public speaking and storytelling skills produced a better preacher in me. My college experience in fine and performing arts as a forensic artist and an actress helped me bring the Bible and God's Holy Word to life. My corporate management and leadership skills enables me to lead ministry effectively and with a standard of excellence that is deserving for an excellent God. My skills in training, mentoring and coaching staff, teams, and employees transfer easily into the community service and ministry work that I do to empower women, youth, and the body of Christ.

My calling is beyond the four walls of the church. I have joined two ministries in New Jersey that elevates community activism. The Interfaith Action Movement (I AM) is

an organization whose mission is to advance social, spiritual, and economic needs of marginalized communities of color in New Jersey. The Liberative Justice Ministries is a diverse group of leaders with a mission to dismantle systemic oppression and build transformative equitable communities. My passion for community service is embodied in my lifetime memberships with Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and the National Council for Negro Women (NCNW).

After experiencing an eyewitness account of injustice with the death of Grandma Susie in the church bible study in Charleston South Carolina, I knew that God was preparing me for greater work. This injustice requires tearing down strongholds in the heart of people. Hatred has no room in the church. Evil has no place in the church.

Clergy are responsible for teaching love, care, and concern for God and humankind. This love extends to all humankind. After the death of George Floyd, this focus was reaffirmed. The church must stand up for justice. The church can no longer wait to pursue justice. Justice must be pursued through the demonstration of unconditional love for all humankind while walking with God.

This current growing edge is calling out how does the church body do justice for the upliftment of all humanity, which includes the Black community? How does the church elevate and expand the ministry to do justice in America? How does the church empower those who suffer needlessly because of systemic oppression and disenfranchisement in an unjust American society?

The critical work in this growing edge requires my soul work. How do I engage the Black community as a Black ordained clergywoman? How do I network, collaborate,

and communicate in a manner that will affect positive change and achieve greater results with clergy in other faith groups? How do I blend my community work, civic leadership, and church calling to achieve a liberated society? How do I do ministry that is meaningful, impactful, significant, relevant, and matters to the body of Christ and to the church community?

Develop the Synergy

The youth represent our next generation of leaders and it is incumbent upon the authorities in the church to shift the current narrative in this country of disenfranchisement, isolation, social injustice, and civic unrest. Those who represent the authority of the church must create and co-create with the community a culture of inclusion and a culture of equity. I am moved by the Holy Spirit to co-create a solution in Franklin Township to bridge the gap as Franklin's youth transition from childhood to adulthood with great success.

Moral leadership in the church requires courage to promote an awakening of the social ills in this society. The idea of a culture of justice and a culture of fairness pivots the next generation to dream again and create a narrative of possibilities. William Grippo shared that he considers Franklin his mission and is always looking to find ways to give back by asking, "How do we present the face of Christ to the township?"⁴⁷ I echo the same and often reflect how can I do the same. How can I present Jesus Christ in Franklin Township?

⁴⁷ William Grippo, "Interview."

Jesus was known to hold three offices – the office of prophet, priest, and king. The face of Christ I want to present to the world is the office of prophet. The ability to speak truth to the powers of darkness, principalities, and forces that dare to denigrate and belittle the humanity in our black and brown communities is my charge. The power of the church is reflected outside of the four walls of the building. The power of the church in the community is revealed in the prophet. The prophet speaks God’s truth to the world’s power as an act of love and justice.

Restorative justice is a point of emphasis in prophetic activism. Reverend Doctor William J. Barber, II, believes in the “prophetic power of the Bible” and those who do believe in the Bible’s prophetic power must also be committed to social justice.⁴⁸ The politics of Jesus are rooted in grace, love, and justice empowering the poor and the rejected.⁴⁹ The outcast, the rejected, the dejected, the ostracized “must prophetically challenge” human systems that cast aside and ostracize instead of uplift, encourage, and strengthen humanity.⁵⁰ This restorative justice forges a new equitable way for humanity to live.

This project will offer the opportunity to explore prophetic activism advocating for social holiness, social transformation, faith-based activism, and spiritual social action. Reverend Doctor D. Anthony Everett defines prophetic activism as ministry that matters because it is rooted in faith and liberation as a response to social problems and crisis.⁵¹

⁴⁸ William J. Barber, II., *We are Called To Be A Movement* (New York, NY: Workman Publishing Co., Inc., 2020), 3.

⁴⁹ Barber, II., *We are Called To Be A Movement*, 7-17.

⁵⁰ Barber, II., *We are Called To Be A Movement*, 20.

⁵¹ D. Anthony Everett, “Ministry in Times of Crisis: Prophetic Activism – From the Cross to the Community,” Plenary via Cisco Webex, United Theological Seminary, Dayton, Ohio, October 22, 2020.

Reverend Doctor D. Anthony Everett expounds upon prophetic activism highlighting the roles and responsibilities of those who engage in this transformative work. Reverend Doctor Everett asserts,

Prophetic Activism provides the activist, clergy, and other leaders a way to work for justice in their context by using liberation lenses grounded in faith and bringing clarity and wokeness to ministry.⁵² Not only are prophetic activists ‘woke,’ but the prophetic voice rises when systems abdicate their responsibilities to the least of these.⁵³

This project has the potential to bridge the gap for Franklin’s youth. Guidance for high school graduates who are not on the college placement track is essential.

Acknowledging that the African tradition suggests it takes a village to nurture the youth will reduce crime and deviant behavior in the community. The idea of an “extended family network” and this African concept that it takes a village to raise socially conscious youth is indicative of “faith based and community organizations supporting rites of passage programs and other projects that extend the parenting function” as our youth journey into the larger community.⁵⁴

Resources to support the parents will be a tremendous support. Ideas such as a rent-a-parent or parent co-op may present viable solutions and support for the working parents in the community who want to be more involved in their children’s journey of successes and achievements. A youth leadership conference or youth summit and training forum led by their peers can be the solution to address the crisis of humanity in the next generation. This youth leadership conference or youth summit and training forum would

⁵² Everett, “Ministry in Times of Crisis: Prophetic Activism.”

⁵³ Everett, “Ministry in Times of Crisis: Prophetic Activism.”

⁵⁴ Charise Jones and Kumea Shorter-Gooden, *Shifting: The Double Lives of Black Women in America* (New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, Inc., 2003), 257-258.

engage the youth in their civic, moral, and social responsibilities as well as introduce them to technical skills to secure gainful employment such as certifications, trade skills, and job fairs to offer exposure to the different types of jobs available to them as high school graduates.

As a leader in the faith community, this solution will accomplish a few objectives. The church successfully engages the community. Further research and study will prove out the biblical, historical, theological, interdisciplinary, and spiritual implications. The approach is to collaborate with the many organizations and resources in the community. My network and experiences in information technology, coaching, mentoring, career development, community service, and ministry work position me as a leader in the community.

The goal of this project is to address the crisis of family, the crisis of identity, and the crisis of black youth. After prayer, reflection, and contemplation, solving the needs of our youth has the potential to nurture them with long term benefits as a healthy socially responsible citizen. In the words of Doctor Samuel DeWitt Proctor, “When your eye is trained to look for it, there is plenty of evidence that there is a faith proposition that operates, and that gets results.”⁵⁵

Generation Y, Generation Z, and Generation Alpha need to understand there is a moral compass and a moral standard that leads to a spirit of excellence, social responsibility, and social holiness. The prophetic office of the church demonstrates to the world how to see the image of God in all of humanity. The church and the Franklin

⁵⁵ Samuel DeWitt Proctor, *The Substance of Things Hoped For: A Memoir of African American Faith* (Valley, PA: Valley Forge Press, 1994), 130-131.

community will grow together through a spirit-led transformation. The transformation should produce spiritual empowerment, economic empowerment, civic engagement, and social action. Crime should decrease and the pipeline to prison should be decimated. Spiritual empowerment is living with purpose on purpose. Economic empowerment is developing a skill or trade that can be monetized and profitable. Civic engagement is voting regularly, taking souls to the polls, and working as a poll worker to name a few examples. Social action is supporting the Franklin Food Bank or the Martin Luther King Day Scholarship Luncheon to help those in need.

There are many opportunities in Franklin Township to meet the needs of the youth and their families in this community. The Human Relations Commission, The Franklin Township Youth Services Commission, and the Franklin Township Community Youth Center may present excellent community events, empowering opportunities, and critical resources that are needed to affect positive change for youth at all ages. Given my twenty-five years of corporate leadership experience and sixteen years in ordained ministry, I am optimistic that I can support the spiritual and social development of our youth and their families. As a prophetic activist, elevating the spirit and voice of the youth and empowering their families in social and civic engagement is at the heart of this mission work. When youth are empowered to share their voice and attain their dreams and goals, then Franklin Township can continue to celebrate the diversity and wellness of this community. William Grippo shared that the diversity in Franklin is to be celebrated as the “great fabric of community” while defining community as “Franklin’s corporate

community, small business community, and excellent school system, which makes Franklin a well-integrated community. The mosaic of diversity is our strength.”⁵⁶

The Franklin Township School District publishes annually a summary profile for each graduating class. The requirements for high school students to graduate is as follows:

One Hundred Twenty (120) credits are required for graduation, with five credits earned for each full-year course. Students may fulfill graduation requirements in whole or in part through a program of study that meets or exceeds the Core Curriculum Content Standards (Option II). This may include college course work, internships, and community service. In addition, students must demonstrate a mastery of skills on the NJSLA, a Substitute Competency Test, or meet the criteria of the NJDOE Portfolio Appeal.⁵⁷

The local high school provides varying degrees of educational learning opportunities at Princeton University, Raritan Valley Community College, the local vocational school called Somerset County Technical School, and advanced placement and honors work for those interested in college as a next step.⁵⁸ College Admission and Post-Secondary Plans reflects that almost eighty percent attend college or university where forty-four percent of the Class of 2020 attended four-year college and thirty-four percent attended two-year college. The remaining students in the graduating class who chose the path of going into the workplace, military, or other is twenty-two percent.⁵⁹ The students whose path upon graduation that is not as certain as recruitment in the military may need a bridge to transition from school to the workplace. Given the fact that over

⁵⁶ William Grippo, “Interview.”

⁵⁷ Franklin High School, *High School Profile 2020-2021*, [https://www.franklinboe.org/cms/lib/NJ01000817/Centricity/Domain/287/School Profile 20-21.pdf](https://www.franklinboe.org/cms/lib/NJ01000817/Centricity/Domain/287/School%20Profile%2020-21.pdf).

⁵⁸ Franklin High School, *High School Profile 2020-2021*.

⁵⁹ Franklin High School, *High School Profile 2020-2021*.

ninety-seven percent of these high school students self-identify as persons of color, it is a moral and social imperative to ensure they graduate from high school as valuable, skilled, socially, and civically responsible members of the larger community.⁶⁰

The challenge for parents raising black youth is how to develop a secure sense of self-identity.⁶¹ “Many Black mothers see educational achievement and success as the only defense against racism and sexism.”⁶² The importance of a good education and one’s ability to be bi-lingual, also “code-switch,” speaking Black English and standard English is a standard competency many Black mothers require of their children to convey their thoughts clearly and fluently given a particular context or audience.⁶³ Black children must be understood. Black youth must know their options to succeed in life if college is not a viable option for them.

Conclusion

In theological reflection, the requirement is to find a problem in ministry, solve the problem in ministry, design an effective intervention, find, and use appropriate resources, and evaluate the results.⁶⁴ The lack of guidance and direction for the Black youth in Franklin is causing unrest, an increase in unproductive activity, and sometimes even criminal activity in Franklin. The youth in the community, upon graduation, are

⁶⁰ Franklin High School, *High School Profile 2020-2021*.

⁶¹ Jones, *Shifting*, 246.

⁶² Jones, *Shifting*, 250.

⁶³ Jones, *Shifting*, 249-250.

⁶⁴ Nancy Jean Vyhmeister and Terry Dwain Robertson, *Your Guide to Writing Quality Research Papers: For Students of Religion and Theology*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014), 86.

distracted with nonproductive and sometimes criminal activity as they learn how to navigate life.

The solution to this problem is to create synergy with the Franklin adults, community resources, and the municipality's institutions to provide guidance and direction for our youth. An effective intervention to bridge the gap from childhood to adulthood is to design a youth summit that supports their ability to navigate adulthood and how best to transition in the community as socially and civically responsible citizens. Doctor Samuel DeWitt Proctor declares that America is only 200 years old; therefore, there is opportunity to embrace the ideals of equality and justice for all while we "optimize the human condition" and "create a new model of genuine community."⁶⁵ If the youth of Franklin Township embrace the skills, tools, and knowledge to be productive, socially conscious, and civically minded citizens, then Franklin Township's youth will be emboldened with self-confidence and a greater understanding of the importance of social holiness. Upon evaluation of the results, the expected outcomes of this "genuine community" are the testimonials of those youth. The expected testimonials will express preparedness, eagerness, and clarity about their social and civic responsibilities as well as their path forward in life. This is the work of the prophetic activist in the community.

⁶⁵ Proctor, *The Substance of Things Hoped For*, 241-242.

CHAPTER TWO

BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS

Introduction

There is a significant gap in the racial wealth in the state of New Jersey which adds to the stress of gaining financial stability and security for Black and Brown communities.¹ People of color, especially young people of color, are also more likely to be imprisoned for nonviolent offenses in New Jersey.² There are young people in Franklin Township Somerset, New Jersey, who are not on a college career path.³ Advocates, educators, community, and faith-based leaders are solutioning how best to positively impact the youth to avoid the New Jersey penal system.

Franklin's Black youth must know alternative positive paths for economic empowerment and how to succeed in life if college is not a viable option. Franklin Township will support their transition from high school to working citizens and bridge the gap into adulthood. Community-based collaboration with Franklin's adults, community resources, and the municipality's institutions to provide guidance and

¹ New Jersey Institute for Social Justice, "Black and Brown in New Jersey: The Garden State's Shameful Racial Wealth Gap," https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/njisj/pages/689/attachments/original/1603320237/Black_and_Brown_in_NJ_Final.pdf?1603320237.

² New Jersey Institute for Social Justice. *2016 NJISJ Annual Report*, 7, https://issuu.com/njisj/docs/new_jersey_institute_for_social_jus.

³ Franklin High School, *High School Profile 2020-2021*, <https://www.franklinboe.org/cms/lib/NJ01000817/Centricity/Domain/287/SchoolProfile20-21.pdf>.

direction for the graduating youth will be imperative to create this community synergy and good will.

Based on Franklin Township as my context, the needs for the youth in this community requires a project that will make a difference and create a life-changing impact for the youth and the community overall. I am led by the Holy Spirit to develop a ministry project that attempts to understand and bring hope for alternative ways to succeed and be productive economically, spiritually, and socially. This project will explore the work of prophetic activism advocating for economic empowerment, social holiness, and spiritual social action with Franklin's youth.

Proverbs 22:1-16 is part of an overall collection of wisdom literature that informs this project in the Franklin Township community.⁴ The Book of Proverbs highlights the importance of social holiness and social action. The importance of training youth in their development and growth process is outlined in simple clear declarative statements.

This paper will reflect on the idea that the Book of Proverbs and how this specific pericope informed the lives of the Israelites during the pre-exilic and post-exilic periods.⁵ The authority of Proverbs was written in the “spirit of the archetypal lawgiver, psalmist, or sage” and was compiled, organized and edited over several centuries with an Israelite character.⁶ Proverbs is a “literary gathering of traditional oral cultures of mothers, fathers,

⁴ Proverbs 22:1-16, *New Revised Standard Version* of the Bible. Unless otherwise noted, all scripture references in this document are from the NRSV.

⁵ John Barton and John Muddiman, eds., *The Oxford Bible Commentary* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press USA - OSO, 2013), 406.

⁶ Raymond C. Van Leeuwen, “The Book of Proverbs: Introduction, Commentary and Reflections,” in *The New Interpreter's Bible Commentary in Twelve Volumes*, vol. 5, ed. Leander E. Keck (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1994), 20.

teachers and leaders based on their life experiences and ancestral wisdom” passed down to generations of youth in the community.⁷ This reflection can equally inform the lives of youth in the Franklin Township community. Franklin’s youth can also learn the same sage wisdom and communal advice as illustrated in Proverbs 22. The Book of Proverbs will lay a biblical foundation for this project that sets the tenor and tone of how to develop youth into vibrant morally conscious and responsible citizens in their family units, communities, and the world.

The Book of Proverbs supports the communal development of youth and how to undergird youth with a solid moral foundation built upon wisdom and common understanding. This chapter will explore the Book of Proverbs and the literary elements, the historical setting, the cultural and social setting, major themes of “wealth, poverty, and morality,”⁸ as well as a study of key words that will solidify a firm foundation for this prophetic social work.

Proverbs: Literary Analysis

There are three wisdom books in the third division of the Hebrew Tanak, which is called the Ketuvim⁹. The Ketuvim is inclusive of many genres of literature in the wisdom literature detailed in Proverbs, Job, and Ecclesiastes¹⁰. This literary analysis suggests that

⁷ Van Leeuwen, “The Book of Proverbs: Introduction, Commentary and Reflections,” 19.

⁸ Alice Ogden Bellis, “Proverbs,” in *Wisdom Commentary*, vol. 23, ed. Sarah Tanzer and Barbara E Reid (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2018), 207.

⁹ Madipoane Masenya (ngwan’a Mphahlele) and Rodney S. Sadler, “The Ketuvim: A Rationale.” in *The Africana Bible: Reading Israel's Scriptures from Africa and the African Diaspora* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2010), 217, <https://doi-org.dtl.idm.oclc.org/10.2307/j.ctv19cwbj9.42>.

¹⁰ Masenya and Sadler, “The Ketuvim: A Rationale,” 217.

wisdom literature informs the spiritual and practical everyday living for the Israelite community.¹¹

Proverbs is a book of “several collections into a common framework of Solomonic proverbs providing insight on wisdom, instruction, understanding, intelligence, righteousness, justice, equity, discretion, knowledge, prudence, learning, and skill.”¹² The Book of Proverbs is divided into two main parts: the first part is Prv 1-9 and the second part is Prv 10-31. The first nine chapters are “a series of didactic discourses comprising parental instructions and speeches by personified Wisdom” and the remaining chapters are “short proverbial sayings” with the major theme of these chapters conveying the “surpassing value of wisdom and the theological character of wisdom.”¹³ Instruction is reflected in Prv 1-9; 22:17-24:22; 30-31; sentences are reflected in Prv 10:1 – 22:16; and Prv 25-29 are ten lectures with five interludes in between them with the mandate to pursue wisdom.¹⁴ The Book of Proverbs is then further categorized as follows:

Prv 1:1-9:18, The Didactic Discourses

Prv 10:1-22:16, The First Solomonic Collection

Prv 22:17-24:22, Sayings of the Wise

Prv 24:23—34, Further Sayings of the Wise

Prv 25:1—29:27, The Second Solomonic Collection

¹¹ Katharine J. Dell, *The Book of Proverbs in Social and Theological Context* (Cambridge, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 55-56.

¹² James L. Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom: An Introduction* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), 32.

¹³ Barton and Muddiman, *The Oxford Bible Commentary*, 405.

¹⁴ Mark R. Sneed, *The Social World of the Sages: An Introduction to Israelite and Jewish Wisdom Literature* (Minneapolis, MN: 1517 Media, 2015), 299.

Prv 30:1-33, The Sayings of Agur

Prv 31:1-9, The Words of Lemuel

Prv 31:10-31, The Good Wife¹⁵

Prv 10:1-24:22 is the largest collection of the “classical proverb style in the book” which addresses proper behavior in the world with a reverence for God.¹⁶ This subcollection, Prv 16:1-22:16, uses “the form of the two-part antithetical proverb” emphasizing the consequences of one’s actions and reinforcing trust in God.¹⁷ These collections express God’s “righteousness as the moral foundation for the moral and social order of the world.”¹⁸ The focal point in both collections are similar in that success in the world is the ultimate goal; however, the approach varies.¹⁹ “Proverbs 10:1-24:22 focuses on the qualities necessary for success in the world and Proverbs 16:1-22:16 focuses on the principles of conduct necessary for success in the world.”²⁰ Regardless of the approach, success is evident if the collections are heard and followed by the community.²¹

¹⁵ Barton and Muddiman, *The Oxford Bible Commentary*, 406.

¹⁶ Marvin A. Sweeney, *TANAK: A Theological and Critical Introduction to the Jewish Bible* (Minneapolis, MN: 1517 Media, 2012), 404.

¹⁷ Sweeney, *TANAK*, 405.

¹⁸ Sweeney, *TANAK*, 405.

¹⁹ Sweeney, *TANAK*, 405.

²⁰ Sweeney, *TANAK*, 405.

²¹ Sweeney, *TANAK*, 405.

Proverbs, as a biblical wisdom literature text, employs various literary forms.²²

One such form is the short proverb and there are different kinds of a short proverb.²³

There are also additional “refinements to the short proverb such as acrostics and riddles, dialogues, discourses, and what Giorgio Buccellati has called “lyric introspection.”²⁴ In terms of forms, Jennie Grillo asserts,

In general, proverbs are compressed, vivid, frequently paradoxical, require a pause for thought, and demand an often rueful assent; as pedagogical devices, they engage a mentally active style of learning, and their form follows the bounded and patterned world that they reflect.²⁵

Further literary analysis suggests that the many forms are effective styles to convey the wisdom and knowledge in a way that is common and understood by the community.²⁶

The Book of Proverbs highlights several collections in the form of proverbs which are “two-part sayings that exploit Hebrew poetic parallelism with numerous characteristic forms.”²⁷ Parallelism refers to the grouping of lines or half lines that the sages used because they had a flair for literary art; however, the proverb was considered credible wisdom based on the popularity and agreement of the people.²⁸ Prv 10-15 are antithetic

²² Jennie Grillo, “The Wisdom Literature,” in *The Hebrew Bible: A Critical Companion*, ed. John Barton (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016), 182-183.

²³ Grillo, “The Wisdom Literature,” 182-183.

²⁴ Grillo, “The Wisdom Literature,” 182-183.

²⁵ Grillo, “The Wisdom Literature,” 186.

²⁶ Grillo, “The Wisdom Literature,” 182-186.

²⁷ Grillo, “The Wisdom Literature,” 186.

²⁸ Roland E. Murphy, *The Tree of Life: An Exploration of Biblical Wisdom Literature*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2002), 6-7.

parallelism and Prv 16:1-Prv 22:16 are synonymous parallelism.²⁹ There are some texts that can use many types of parallelism at once, such as Prv 22:6.³⁰

There are three fundamental types of parallelism in Prv 22:6 and they are antithetic parallelism, synonymous parallelism, and progressive parallelism.³¹ Synonymous parallelism reinforces an observation using a positive and a negative repeating the point of the lines but using different words.³² Synonymous parallelism denotes a repetition between the lines even though they may not be similar.³³ Antithetic parallelism means there is a measure of opposition between the lines.³⁴ Progressive parallelism is the idea of building upon the ideas of the first line with the second line to refine its meaning and the meaning is best understood with the second line.³⁵ The use of parallelism provides variety with the literary choices employed; and, the multiple forms of parallelism offers additional clarity for the meaning of the proverbs.³⁶

There is no logical unity to these collections and there is no specific context provided for these proverbs; yet the proverbs are depicted as brief, concise, assertive, insightful, provokes surprise, and “bears the authority of tradition.”³⁷ The Book of

²⁹ Murphy, *The Tree of Life*, 21.

³⁰ Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom*, 69-70.

³¹ Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom*, 69-70.

³² Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom*, 69-70.

³³ Murphy, *The Tree of Life*, 6.

³⁴ Murphy, *The Tree of Life*, 6.

³⁵ Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom*, 70.

³⁶ Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom*, 69-70.

³⁷ Murphy, *The Tree of Life*, 19.

Proverbs is full of many proverbs which are like jewels and the book is designed with many kinds of jewels with “no literary motive for elaborate designs.”³⁸ These proverbs, or jewels, are “not all laid out in pretty, symmetric designs or divided into neat little piles.”³⁹ Proverbs are not neatly organized yet “this heaping together of numerous ideas without further elucidation has been appropriately called stereometry.”⁴⁰ The literary art form of the proverbs makes for a compelling piece of wisdom literature in the Hebrew Bible.⁴¹

Proverbs: Historical Analysis

The material in Proverbs evolved over several centuries and served to educate in the home and in the court.⁴² The time of the book’s composition is argued for both the pre-exilic period and post-exilic period but there is little concrete evidence that definitively suggests one over the other.⁴³ The Book of Proverbs was poetic literature written and recited to develop moral character based on the experiences of prior

³⁸ Michael V. Fox, “Proverbs 10-31: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary,” *The Anchor Yale Bible Commentary*, vol. 18B, ed. David Noel Freedman (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), 481.

³⁹ Fox, “Proverbs 10-31,” 481.

⁴⁰ Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom*, 32.

⁴¹ Murphy, *The Tree of Life*, 6-7.

⁴² John J. Collins, *Introduction to the Hebrew Bible*, 3rd ed. (Minneapolis, MN: 1517 Media, 2018), 524.

⁴³ Collins, “Proverbs,” 524.

generations.⁴⁴ “This collection of ancient Israel’s wisdom is ascribed to Solomon, the second and last king of the united monarchy and the quintessential sage of Israel.”⁴⁵

The oldest section of the Book of Proverbs, Prv 10-30, was gathered and edited during the monarchy as early as the time of Solomon in the mid-tenth century BCE and continued into the late eighth and early seventh centuries BCE during King Hezekiah’s reign over Judah.⁴⁶ “Finally, the framing units of Proverbs 1–9 and 31 were added in the early postexilic period (late sixth to early fifth centuries BCE) as the community struggled to rebuild in the aftermath of the Babylonian exile.”⁴⁷ Prv 1-9 is considered the latest section of the book as an extended introduction written in the post-exilic period while Prv 10-31 were likely written during the pre-exilic period.⁴⁸ Despite some proverbs referencing the king in the pre-exilic period, most proverbs are post-exilic at the time of the Babylonian exile.⁴⁹ The eighth and seventh centuries were a time of growth as well as expansion in literacy in the Judean royal administration.⁵⁰ “The fall of the Northern Kingdom in 722 [BCE] may have provided the impetus to record, re- shape, preserve, and, in effect, ‘canonize’ the wisdom of the people and the royal court.”⁵¹

⁴⁴ Christine Roy Yoder, “Proverbs,” in *Women’s Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, 3rd ed., Revised and Updated, Twentieth Anniversary Edition, ed. Carol A. Newsom, Sharon H. Ringe, and Jacqueline E Lapsley (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2012), 232, [http://search.ebscohost.com.dtl.idm.oclc.org/login.aspx?direct=true &db=nlebk&AN=558296&site=ehost-live&scope=site&ebv=EB&ppid=pp_232](http://search.ebscohost.com.dtl.idm.oclc.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=558296&site=ehost-live&scope=site&ebv=EB&ppid=pp_232).

⁴⁵ Yoder, “Proverbs,” 232.

⁴⁶ Yoder, “Proverbs,” 232.

⁴⁷ Yoder, “Proverbs,” 232.

⁴⁸ Barton and Muddiman, *The Oxford Bible Commentary*, 406.

⁴⁹ Bellis, “Proverbs,” 210.

⁵⁰ Fox, *Proverbs 10-31*, 499-500.

⁵¹ Fox, *Proverbs 10-31*, 499-500.

The Book of Proverbs reflects all aspects of life in ancient Israel and captures the culture and realities that were passed down by the sages.⁵² When the authorship of Proverbs is discussed, King Solomon, the son of King David, the King of Israel is assumed because King Solomon represents the wisdom of Israel; however, there was a vast array of wisdom in the East and in Egypt.⁵³ King Solomon as the author is highly unlikely because many kings were not literate and literacy began to flourish in the eighth century in ancient Israel.⁵⁴ Nevertheless, scholars do agree that “Proverbs represents a tradition that can be traced back to Solomon.”⁵⁵

There were similarities between Israel’s wisdom literature and other wisdom books among foreign entities like Egypt.⁵⁶ One primary similarity was the royal court of Solomon and Hezekiah.⁵⁷ Proverbs as a book of wisdom about kings and rulers is not the only conclusion; there are other perspectives.⁵⁸ “Ordinary people in the ancient world living under a monarchical system” can express their own opinions and thoughts of the duties of their political rulers and imagine life at court as well as their own lives akin to how ordinary citizens today discuss government and politics.⁵⁹ Israel’s wisdom was an

⁵² Charles W. Hedrick, *The Wisdom of Jesus: Between the Sages of Israel and the Apostles of the Church* (Cambridge, UK: Lutterworth Press, 2014), 61, 63, <https://doi-org.dtl.idm.oclc.org/10.2307/j.ctvz0hc9c.8>.

⁵³ Collins, “Proverbs,” 521-522.

⁵⁴ Sneed, *Social World*, 300-301.

⁵⁵ Collins, “Proverbs,” 521-522.

⁵⁶ Roger Norman Whybray, *Wealth and Poverty in the Book of Proverbs* (London, UK: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2009), 59.

⁵⁷ Whybray, *Wealth and Poverty*, 59.

⁵⁸ Whybray, *Wealth and Poverty*, 59.

⁵⁹ Whybray, *Wealth and Poverty*, 59.

asset to the community “often at significant moments when the community was claiming or reclaiming its values.”⁶⁰

Some scholars argue King Solomon was responsible for the wisdom tradition in Israel because there were scribal schools in Jerusalem.⁶¹ King Solomon would need scribes for the service of his kingdom just like other nations in the ancient Near East had scribal schools.⁶² The influence of Egyptian wisdom traditions on Israelite wisdom literature could be attributed to the marriage of King Solomon and Pharaoh’s daughter.⁶³ Scholars continue to argue if King Solomon’s reign can be attributed to the wisdom literature because there is limited archaeological evidence.⁶⁴ The primary place to confirm the existence of any potential evidence is buried under the Temple Mount in Jerusalem.⁶⁵ Since the king and the royal court are mentioned in Prv 10–29 with great emphasis in Prv 28–29, this strengthens the argument that the Book of Proverbs was written during the monarchy period.⁶⁶

The influence on the Egyptian culture and the similarities between Proverbs and Egyptian texts are undeniable.⁶⁷ The wisdom texts in both Israel and Egypt were used in

⁶⁰ Yoder, “Proverbs,” 232-233.

⁶¹ Collins, “*Introduction to the Hebrew Bible*,” 522.

⁶² Collins, “*Introduction to the Hebrew Bible*,” 522.

⁶³ Collins, “*Introduction to the Hebrew Bible*,” 522.

⁶⁴ Collins, “*Introduction to the Hebrew Bible*,” 522.

⁶⁵ Collins, “*Introduction to the Hebrew Bible*,” 522.

⁶⁶ Collins, “*Introduction to the Hebrew Bible*,” 522.

⁶⁷ Murphy, *The Tree of Life*, 23.

the education of royal princes and state officials in royal court schools.⁶⁸ The majority of the proverbial sayings “deal with everyday matters of family, community life, and personal relationships.”⁶⁹ These proverbial sayings were shared as a popular oral tradition that predates the monarchy with the family and community as the popular settings for instructing the young and sharing generational wisdom.⁷⁰ The largest collection, Prv 10:1-22:16, contains pre-exilic material that illustrates the behavior of kings, demeanor of individuals, community matters, and Israel’s farming practices.⁷¹ The economic life in ancient Israel reflected two classes – the rich and the poor. The rich ruled the poor and those who had to borrow became slaves of the lenders.⁷² “In ancient Israel, debt was the leading cause of actual slavery, because when a debtor could not pay a debt on time, the individual was often sold into slavery to pay off the debt.”⁷³

The Hebrew Bible’s wisdom literature is used as the moral authority and standard in the community and used as a “benchmark to measure the conduct of those in power.”⁷⁴ Although there is no direct critique in Proverbs for parents or kings who did not use wisdom, Proverbs is the standard to hold people accountable.⁷⁵ Nevertheless, the direct critique is found in the “pentateuchal, historical, and the prophetic” traditions written in

⁶⁸ Barton and Muddiman, *The Oxford Bible Commentary*, 406.

⁶⁹ Barton and Muddiman, *The Oxford Bible Commentary*, 406.

⁷⁰ Barton and Muddiman, *The Oxford Bible Commentary*, 406.

⁷¹ Hedrick, *Wisdom of Jesus*, 63, 64.

⁷² Bellis, “Proverbs,” 209.

⁷³ Bellis, “Proverbs,” 209.

⁷⁴ Sweeney, *TANAK*, 408-409.

⁷⁵ Sweeney, *TANAK*, 408-409.

the biblical literature that depends upon these proverbial wisdom sayings.⁷⁶ The cultural and social settings of the Israelite community will provide greater context for the people and community structures that held generational traditions of wisdom texts as their source and standard for sacred living.

Proverbs: Social/Cultural Analysis

When the Book of Proverbs was written, the social context reflects a rich culture and heritage in ancient Israel.⁷⁷ The proverbs in the collection “reflect both urban and rural origins, elite and folk traditions.”⁷⁸ “The sages or scribes who produced Proverbs drew on the wisdom of the broader Israelite and Judean agricultural, folk population when crafting their collections of wise sayings, especially in Proverbs 10–29.”⁷⁹ In addition to the proverbial sayings, all knowledge, practical skills, social customs, moral values, and religious traditions were conveyed orally because most people were illiterate.⁸⁰ “There may have been some scribal households, probably in towns, where literary arts were transmitted.”⁸¹

⁷⁶ Sweeney, *TANAK*, 408-409.

⁷⁷ Hedrick, “Surveying the Sages of Ancient Israel,” 61-65.

⁷⁸ Bellis, “Proverbs,” 96.

⁷⁹ Timothy J. Sandoval, “Introduction,” in *Wisdom, Worship, and Poetry: Fortress Commentary on the Bible Study Edition*, ed. Gale A. Yee, Hugh R. Page, and Matthew J. M. Coomber (Minneapolis, MN: 1517 Media, 2016), 515, <https://doi-org.dtl.idm.oclc.org/10.2307/j.ctvz0hc9c.8>.

⁸⁰ Dell, *The Book of Proverbs*, 56.

⁸¹ Dell, *The Book of Proverbs*, 56.

Wisdom thinking in ancient Israel was in three stages: (1) clan wisdom, (2) court wisdom, and (3) theological wisdom.⁸² The family setting was the primary source for character formation under the clan wisdom paradigm.⁸³ Clan wisdom began in the family where the father taught how to master life and the mother played the role assisting the father to build character.⁸⁴ Court wisdom was restricted to a select group of potential rulers and advisors to people in power which outlined ways to behave around kings and eloquence, and fidelity and propriety.⁸⁵ This limited view emphasized the king's responsibility for ensuring justice and recognizing that the throne was founded on righteousness.⁸⁶ Theological wisdom is grounded in the fear of the Lord as well as proper conduct before God and humankind for there is no wisdom without having a relationship with God.⁸⁷

“According to Proverbs, there are two places where moral development is formed: (1) the home, and (2) the larger community. Both are places where wisdom is to be taught and found.”⁸⁸ Two types of wisdom discourses were taught in the home and the community; parental/disciplinary discourse was taught in the home; and the discourse of

⁸² Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom: An Introduction*, 93.

⁸³ Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom: An Introduction*, 93.

⁸⁴ Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom: An Introduction*, 93.

⁸⁵ Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom: An Introduction*, 94.

⁸⁶ Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom: An Introduction*, 94.

⁸⁷ Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom: An Introduction*, 95.

⁸⁸ Naomi Franklin, “Proverbs,” in *The Africana Bible: Reading Israel's Scriptures from Africa and the African Diaspora*, ed. Hugh R. Page, Jr. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2010), 245, <https://doi-org/10.2307/j.ctt17mcs2f.5>.

wisdom was taught in the community.⁸⁹ “Within Israelite society, wisdom was considered to be a very important element, woven into the tapestry of both the culture and the religion.”⁹⁰ Furthermore, the Book of Proverbs affirms the “reality that human beings were created with an innate capacity to acquire and use wisdom.”⁹¹

The education system in ancient Israel before the Hellenistic period was not as formal as school systems in modern history.⁹² The two dominant cultural centres of Israel's world were Egypt and Babylonia.⁹³ Formal schooling and education was considered indispensable.⁹⁴ “In the period before the rise of the monarchy there were few public structures and so, it is argued, it is likely that the family had to be self-sufficient, establishing its own rules, patterns of work and so on.”⁹⁵ Elders from various family groups gathered resembling a tribal community to make familial decisions; yet the family remained the primary structure for learning and educating the children.⁹⁶ Families had many children to support their economic needs and therefore learning skills and procedures for maintaining the household in an agrarian society had to be practical.⁹⁷

⁸⁹ Franklin, “Proverbs,” 245.

⁹⁰ Franklin, “Proverbs,” 245.

⁹¹ Franklin, “Proverbs,” 245.

⁹² Whybray, *Wealth and Poverty*, 69-70.

⁹³ Whybray, *Wealth and Poverty*, 69-70.

⁹⁴ Whybray, *Wealth and Poverty*, 69-70.

⁹⁵ Dell, *The Book of Proverbs*, 55.

⁹⁶ Dell, *The Book of Proverbs*, 55.

⁹⁷ Dell, *The Book of Proverbs*, 55.

Both parents provided guidance to their children on various issues that dealt with morality and how to navigate their way in society based on their lived experiences.⁹⁸

Education in this culture was “simply the basic learning process” to mold a “well-formed individual” with interpersonal skills and a focus on family and the divine.⁹⁹ “Scholars recognize that proverbs were intended primarily as instructions from a father/teacher to a son/male child. Girls were trained in household tasks by women in the women’s quarters.”¹⁰⁰ Boys and girls were raised, pampered, and spoiled together by the women in the women’s quarters.¹⁰¹ Boys had to learn to be men in their pubescent years using physical discipline as the primary approach to develop into manhood as highlighted in Prv 22:15.¹⁰²

The sages wrote about “virtues for character formation” as well as “real vices that moral education needed to warn against.”¹⁰³ The wisdom community had the expectation that these virtues would be followed but they would not force the values.¹⁰⁴ The sages would offer direct instruction by making observations using sentences and proverbial sayings and not necessarily by dictating commands or “admonitions.”¹⁰⁵ “Wisdom

⁹⁸ Dell, *The Book of Proverbs*, 55.

⁹⁹ Dell, *The Book of Proverbs*, 55.

¹⁰⁰ John J. Pilch, *The Cultural Life Setting of the Proverbs* (Minneapolis, MN: 1517 Media, 2016), xii-xiii, <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt17mcs2f.5>.

¹⁰¹ Pilch, *The Cultural Life*, xii-xiii.

¹⁰² Pilch, *The Cultural Life*, xii-xiii.

¹⁰³ Dave Bland, *Proverbs and the Formation of Character* (Cambridge, UK: Lutterworth Press, 2015), 43, <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt17mcs2f.5>.

¹⁰⁴ Bland, *Proverbs and the Formation of Character*, 43.

¹⁰⁵ Bland, *Proverbs and the Formation of Character*, 43.

respects the autonomy of the individual, which allows each student the choice of either accepting or rejecting the instruction.”¹⁰⁶ In the Book of Proverbs there is plenty of evidence of those who rejected the instruction.¹⁰⁷ In the next section, there are major themes highlighted in these proverbial instructions that reflect these observations and the virtues that should be followed and the vices that should be avoided to ensure success in the ancient Israelite world.

Proverbs: Major Theme

There are three major themes that are explored in this pericope: wealth, poverty, and morality.¹⁰⁸ Proverbs is a literary work that requires the reader to “observe and study the world carefully” as the reader considers the proverbial principles to create a productive, successful life.¹⁰⁹ The goal of the Book of Proverbs is to persuade the youth to observe and study the world and to learn in order to lead a successful and well-ordered life according to God’s will.¹¹⁰

“Wealth, social status and power were closely associated” in Proverbs.¹¹¹ “More than 120 verses out of a total of 513 refer to wealth, a comfortable existence, or positions of power and influence” and “more than seventy verses refer to poverty or low social

¹⁰⁶ Bland, *Proverbs and the Formation of Character*, 43.

¹⁰⁷ Bland, *Proverbs and the Formation of Character*, 43.

¹⁰⁸ Bellis, “Proverbs,” 207.

¹⁰⁹ Sweeney, *TANAK*, 400.

¹¹⁰ Sweeney, *TANAK*, 401.

¹¹¹ Whybray, *Wealth and Poverty*, 13.

status.”¹¹² “The texts that deal with wealth and poverty exhibit, among other things, a concern for justice for the poor while decrying the oppressive and dishonest means that are often used to acquire wealth.”¹¹³ The poor are of equal worth to the rich, and “this proverb asserts that the consequence or reward for humility and fear of YHWH is wealth, honor, and life, which are byproducts of a moral education.”¹¹⁴

The Book of Proverbs does not assume that poverty should or should not exist.¹¹⁵ “These two proverbs speak of a divine requirement from the wealthy that they should recognize that the poor, being equally God's creatures with themselves, are not mere inanimate tools to be exploited.”¹¹⁶ God is “deeply involved and provoked to anger by the ill treatment or humiliation of the poorest of his human creatures.”¹¹⁷ The Bible’s wisdom literature issues a demand for social justice, and Proverbs “seeks to instill social virtue” such as “justice, righteousness, and equity,” and there is praise for the monarchs to ensure justice.¹¹⁸

Social justice from the sages’ perspective is about justice and righteousness but is not concerned with the elimination of poverty.¹¹⁹ Efforts to eliminate poverty was not an

¹¹² Whybray, *Wealth and Poverty*, 14-15.

¹¹³ Franklin, “Proverbs,” 245.

¹¹⁴ Bellis, “Proverbs,” 207.

¹¹⁵ Whybray, *Wealth and Poverty*, 41.

¹¹⁶ Whybray, *Wealth and Poverty*, 41-42.

¹¹⁷ Whybray, *Wealth and Poverty*, 41-42.

¹¹⁸ Sandoval, “Introduction,” 514.

¹¹⁹ Sandoval, “Introduction,” 514.

essential concern for social-economic justice in this era in the ancient Near East.¹²⁰ The “gross oppression of the poor” by those responsible to care for them was the issue according to the Hebrew Bible’s wisdom literature because “the economically and socially vulnerable were supposed to be assisted and protected.”¹²¹ The Bible’s “poetic voice of justice” was a form of “social control over the political and economic elite.”¹²² These powerful social positions made them “vulnerable to ethical failures” and “liable to oppress the poor and to take advantage of the marginalized.”¹²³ These scribes addressed this reality by conveying and “promoting a social-justice ideology that acknowledged the legitimacy of political and economic elites only insofar as they were agents of social justice.”¹²⁴ “The Bible’s paternalistic views of justice may not be sufficient to liberate the poor from poverty” but the wisdom literature in Proverbs suggests how best to survive and thrive despite one’s circumstances.¹²⁵

“The main objective of the Wisdom discourses in Proverbs is to develop a strong sense of morality in the youth of the community.”¹²⁶ When the youth develop a strong sense of morality, then the importance of community success is materialized.¹²⁷ Proverbs is a wisdom text that unites the Africana community and depicts the importance of the

¹²⁰ Sandoval, “Introduction,” 514.

¹²¹ Sandoval, “Introduction,” 514.

¹²² Sandoval, “Introduction,” 514.

¹²³ Sandoval, “Introduction,” 514.

¹²⁴ Sandoval, “Introduction,” 514.

¹²⁵ Sandoval, “Introduction,” 515-516.

¹²⁶ Franklin, “Proverbs,” 244.

¹²⁷ Franklin, “Proverbs,” 244.

health and well-being of family, family relationships and hard work.¹²⁸ Youth moral development is important so youth can make a contribution to the larger community as they are being “trained for good citizenship.”¹²⁹

The tradition of wisdom embraces the education process and embodies living out these moral virtues in the “pursuit of character.”¹³⁰ “Education, in the world of the sages, is existential and not primarily academic.”¹³¹ “Wisdom calls on families and faith communities to identify the moral values central to the well-being of the community.”¹³² “In the process of naming those values and embodying them in daily life, the faith community develops a clearer understanding of its identity and responsibility.”¹³³ “Wisdom nurtures the building up of community and one’s responsibility to that community. The whole task of moral education in Proverbs is placed in the context of family and the faith community.”¹³⁴ Family and the faith community are obligated to empower the community with moral character and virtue that the sages honored and cherished in ancient Israel’s wisdom literature.¹³⁵

¹²⁸ Masenya and Sadler, “The Ketuvim: A Rationale,” 217-218.

¹²⁹ Bland, *Proverbs and Formation of Character*, 58.

¹³⁰ Bland, *Proverbs and Formation of Character*, 51.

¹³¹ Bland, *Proverbs and Formation of Character*, 51.

¹³² Bland, *Proverbs and Formation of Character*, 51.

¹³³ Bland, *Proverbs and Formation of Character*, 51.

¹³⁴ Bland, *Proverbs and Formation of Character*, 58.

¹³⁵ Bland, *Proverbs and Formation of Character*, 51-58.

Proverbs: Word Studies

There are some key words in Prv 22:1-16 that convey wisdom. The key words to be explored in this word studies are “good name,” “favor,” “train,” “injustice,” and “oppress.” These key words convey the importance of one’s reputation and how to navigate well in one’s community.

Proverbs 22:1 emphasizes the importance of a good name when it reads, “A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, and favor is better than silver or gold.” Good name is defined as “good favor” and grace, and “the favor or esteem which others have for oneself.”¹³⁶ Good name means reputation and a good reputation was a common concern for the sages and referenced five times in the Book of Proverbs and in Job as well as Ecclesiastes.¹³⁷

The transliterated word for name is “*shem*.”¹³⁸ *Shem* is a masculine noun.¹³⁹ The word origin for “*shem*” is a “primitive word through the idea of definite and conspicuous position.”¹⁴⁰ “*Shem*” is defined as “name, reputation, fame, glory” and there are 851 word usage references in the New American Standard Version.¹⁴¹ The New Revised Standard

¹³⁶ Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler, eds, *The Jewish Study Bible*, 2nd ed. (Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press, 2014), 1989.

¹³⁷ Harold W. Attridge and Wayne A. Meeks, eds, *The HarperCollins Study Bible: New Revised Standard Version Including Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books Student Edition* (New York, NY: HarperCollins Publisher, 2006), 864.

¹³⁸ *The NAS Old Testament Hebrew Lexicon*, s.v. “shem,” <https://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/hebrew/nas/shem.html#Legend>.

¹³⁹ *The NAS Old Testament Hebrew Lexicon*, s.v. “shem,” <https://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/hebrew/nas/shem.html#Legend>.

¹⁴⁰ *The NAS Old Testament Hebrew Lexicon*, s.v. “shem,” <https://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/hebrew/nas/shem.html#Legend>.

¹⁴¹ *The NAS Old Testament Hebrew Lexicon*, s.v. “shem,” <https://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/hebrew/nas/shem.html#Legend>.

Version (NRSV) follows most ancient versions when “good” is added to name signifying the importance of one’s reputation.¹⁴² Israel’s culture was based on “honor-and-shame” and how a person’s identity was or was not respected in the community.¹⁴³ A good name is also referenced in Genesis, 1 and 2 Samuel, and Ecclesiastes.¹⁴⁴

Proverbs 22:1 emphasizes the importance of favor when it reads, “A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, and favor is better than silver or gold.”¹⁴⁵ The transliterated word for favor is “*chen*.”¹⁴⁶ *Chen* is a masculine noun. *Chen* is defined as “favour, grace, charm, elegance, acceptance” with sixty-nine word usages referenced in the New American Standard Version.¹⁴⁷ The word origin for *chen* is a “primitive root” of *chanan*.¹⁴⁸ *Chanan* is defined as “to be gracious, show favour, pity; (*Qal*) to show favour, be gracious; (*Niphal*) to be pitied; (*Piel*) to make gracious, make favourable, be gracious; (*Poel*) to direct favour to, have mercy on; (*Hophal*) to be shown favour, be shown

¹⁴² Van Leeuwen, “The Book of Proverbs: Introduction, Commentary and Reflections,” 197.

¹⁴³ Van Leeuwen, “The Book of Proverbs: Introduction, Commentary and Reflections,” 197.

¹⁴⁴ Van Leeuwen, “The Book of Proverbs: Introduction, Commentary and Reflections,” 197.

¹⁴⁵ Attridge and Meeks, *HarperCollins Study Bible*, 876.

¹⁴⁶ *The NAS Old Testament Hebrew Lexicon*, s.v. “chen,” <https://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/hebrew/nas/chen.html>.

¹⁴⁷ *The NAS Old Testament Hebrew Lexicon*, s.v. “chen,” <https://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/hebrew/nas/chen.html>.

¹⁴⁸ *The NAS Old Testament Hebrew Lexicon*, s.v. “chanan,” <https://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/hebrew/nas/chanan.html>.

consideration; (*Hithpael*) to seek favour, implore favour.”¹⁴⁹ There are seventy-seven word usage references in the New American Standard Version.¹⁵⁰

“To find favor or grace with someone is to be a *persona grata*, accepted and esteemed.”¹⁵¹ This word appears thirteen times in Proverbs and is often associated with an “aesthetic significance of charm or beauty.”¹⁵² This favor means “charm” or an “attractive personality that creates a favorable impression” that adheres to wisdom which produces this favor.¹⁵³

The sages turn toward what is necessary to train the young.¹⁵⁴ Proverbs 22:6 reads, “Train children in the right way, and when old, they will not stray.”¹⁵⁵ The transliterated word for train is “*chanak*.”¹⁵⁶ *Chanak* is a verb.¹⁵⁷ The word origin for *chanak* is a “primitive root.”¹⁵⁸ *Chanak* is defined as “to train, dedicate, inaugurate, (*Qal*)

¹⁴⁹ *The NAS Old Testament Hebrew Lexicon*, s.v. “chanan,” <https://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/hebrew/nas/chanan.html>.

¹⁵⁰ *The NAS Old Testament Hebrew Lexicon*, s.v. “chanan,” <https://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/hebrew/nas/chanan.html>.

¹⁵¹ Van Leeuwen, “The Book of Proverbs: Introduction, Commentary and Reflections,” 197.

¹⁵² R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer and Bruce K. Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, s.v. “hen,” (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2003), 303.

¹⁵³ Harris, Archer, and Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, s.v. “hen,” 303.

¹⁵⁴ Christine Roy Yoder, “Proverbs,” in *Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries*, <https://www-ministrymatters-com.dtl.idm.oclc.org/reader/9781426759789/#chap03.html!pro22a>.

¹⁵⁵ Attridge and Meeks, *HarperCollins Study Bible*, 876.

¹⁵⁶ *The NAS Old Testament Hebrew Lexicon*, s.v. “chanak,” <https://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/hebrew/nas/chanak.html>.

¹⁵⁷ *The NAS Old Testament Hebrew Lexicon*, s.v. “chanak,” <https://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/hebrew/nas/chanak.html>.

¹⁵⁸ *The NAS Old Testament Hebrew Lexicon*, s.v. “chanak,” <https://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/hebrew/nas/chanak.html>.

to train, train up, to dedicate.”¹⁵⁹ There are five word usage references, which is rather infrequent.¹⁶⁰ Train is defined as “to prepare through instruction and practice for war and/or life.”¹⁶¹

The root for “train up” is “always used in biblical Hebrew and Aramaic for the dedication, or initial use of a house or temple,” but as a verb this word is a “rite of passage through which an adolescent gains adult status.”¹⁶² A more accurate translation is “begin or initiate.”¹⁶³ *Qadesh* is a synonym which means “to set apart.”¹⁶⁴ This word and its derivatives refer to an action, and to be in connection with, thus this term is used as a community action, such as rites of inauguration.¹⁶⁵

Proverbs 22:8 addresses injustice when it reads, “Whoever sows injustice will reap calamity, and the rod of anger will fail.”¹⁶⁶ The transliterated word for injustice/iniquity is “’avval” which is a masculine noun.¹⁶⁷ The definition is “unjust one, perverse one, and unrighteous one.”¹⁶⁸ There are five word usage references in the New

¹⁵⁹ *The NAS Old Testament Hebrew Lexicon*, s.v. “chanak,” <https://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/hebrew/nas/chanak.html>.

¹⁶⁰ Harris, Archer, and Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 301.

¹⁶¹ Tremper Longman, III, ed., *The Baker Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2013), 2383.

¹⁶² Van Leeuwen, *The Book of Proverbs: Introduction, Commentary and Reflections*, 198.

¹⁶³ Harris, Archer, and Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, s.v. “hanak,” 301.

¹⁶⁴ Harris, Archer, and Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, s.v. “hanak,” 301.

¹⁶⁵ Harris, Archer, and Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, s.v. “hanak,” 301.

¹⁶⁶ Attridge and Meeks, *HarperCollins Study Bible*, 876.

¹⁶⁷ *The NAS Old Testament Hebrew Lexicon*, s.v. “avval,” <https://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/hebrew/nas/avval.html>.

¹⁶⁸ *The NAS Old Testament Hebrew Lexicon*, s.v. “avval,” <https://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/hebrew/nas/avval.html>.

American Standard Version.¹⁶⁹ The word origin is intensive from the primitive root word “*aval*,” which is a verb and means “(*Piel*), to act wrongfully or unjustly” where there are two word usage references.¹⁷⁰ This verse “offers comfort to the oppressed assuring them of God’s justice.”¹⁷¹ The term is used as a label for people, such as oppressive rulers.¹⁷² The feminine noun “*awla*” is more of an abstract meaning for violent deeds like murder, oppression, and viciousness.¹⁷³ Humankind can get rid of *awla* but must seek God because humankind does not have the power within to do this on their own; they need God to be rid of acting unjustly.¹⁷⁴ This term refers to the character of God’s enemies.¹⁷⁵

Proverbs 22:16 deals with oppression of the vulnerable when it reads, “Oppressing the poor in order to enrich oneself, and giving to the rich, will lead only to loss.”¹⁷⁶ The transliterated word for oppressing is “*’ashaq*” which is a verb and means “to press upon, oppress, violate, defraud, do violence, get deceitfully, wrong, extort; (*Qal*) to oppress, wrong, extort to oppress; (*Pual*) to be exploited, be crushed.”¹⁷⁷ There

¹⁶⁹ *The NAS Old Testament Hebrew Lexicon*, s.v. “avval,” <https://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/hebrew/nas/avval.html>.

¹⁷⁰ *The NAS Old Testament Hebrew Lexicon*, s.v. “aval,” <https://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/hebrew/nas/aval.html>.

¹⁷¹ Van Leeuwen, “The Book of Proverbs: Introduction, Commentary and Reflections,” 198.

¹⁷² Harris, Archer and Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, s.v. “awwal,” 653.

¹⁷³ Harris, Archer and Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, s.v. “awla,” 653.

¹⁷⁴ Harris, Archer and Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, s.v. “awla,” 653.

¹⁷⁵ Harris, Archer and Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, s.v. “awla,” 654.

¹⁷⁶ Attridge and Meeks, *HarperCollins Study Bible*, 877.

¹⁷⁷ *The NAS Old Testament Hebrew Lexicon*, s.v. “ashaq,” <https://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/hebrew/nas/ashaq.html>.

are thirty-seven word usage references, and the word origin is a primitive root.¹⁷⁸ The verbal root “*ashaq*” is concerned with acts of abuse of power or authority and abusing those in lower positions.¹⁷⁹ The Hebrew root has been related to the Arabic noun “*asaq*” meaning “roughness, injustice, ill-nature.”¹⁸⁰

Synonyms for “*ashaq*” include “*gazal*,” “*daka*,” “*yana*,” “*lahas*,” “*sarar*,” “*rasas*,” and “*shadad*.”¹⁸¹ “*Gazal*” means “to deprive, take by force.”¹⁸² “*Daka*” means “to be crushed.”¹⁸³ “*Yana*” means “to be violent, to oppress.”¹⁸⁴ “*Lahas*” means “to crowd, oppress, torment.”¹⁸⁵ “*Sarar*” means “to be cramped, oppressed.”¹⁸⁶ “*Rasas*” means “to ill-treat, abuse.”¹⁸⁷ “*Shadad*” means “to devastate, maltreat.”¹⁸⁸ Oppression, at its root and all of its synonyms, is a “grievous sin,” and Israel was warned never to oppress (*ashaq*), especially those without “adequate defense of their rights.”¹⁸⁹

¹⁷⁸ *The NAS Old Testament Hebrew Lexicon*, s.v. “*ashaq*,” <https://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/hebrew/nas/ashaq.html>.

¹⁷⁹ Harris, Archer and Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, s.v. “*ashaq*,” 705.

¹⁸⁰ Harris, Archer and Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, s.v. “*ashaq*,” 705.

¹⁸¹ Harris, Archer and Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, s.v. “*ashaq*,” 705.

¹⁸² Harris, Archer and Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, s.v. “*ashaq*,” 705.

¹⁸³ Harris, Archer and Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, s.v. “*ashaq*,” 705.

¹⁸⁴ Harris, Archer and Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, s.v. “*ashaq*,” 705.

¹⁸⁵ Harris, Archer and Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, s.v. “*ashaq*,” 705.

¹⁸⁶ Harris, Archer and Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, s.v. “*ashaq*,” 705.

¹⁸⁷ Harris, Archer and Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, s.v. “*ashaq*,” 705.

¹⁸⁸ Harris, Archer and Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, s.v. “*ashaq*,” 705.

¹⁸⁹ Harris, Archer and Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, s.v. “*ashaq*,” 705.

Conclusion

Proverbs 22:1-16 is a pericope that exemplifies the importance of prophetic activism. Social holiness and social action are demonstrated when the text emphasizes the social responsibility of the community to care for the vulnerable and teach the youth. The ancient Israelite community came together to educate and inform based on their shared knowledge and generational wisdom and experiences.

“The main objective of the Wisdom discourses in Proverbs is to develop a strong sense of morality in the youth of the community, so as to ensure for them a stable life and future that includes by necessity a rightful place in the community.”¹⁹⁰ The role of the prophetic activist is to carry on the work of the sages. The prophetic activist should meet the needs of the youth while offering the proverbial wisdom that will inform, enlighten, and motivate youth in the community to serve others with the same passion and responsibility in which they were served.

The opportunity to empower Franklin Township’s youth with moral character formation while gaining the wisdom and skills to address their socioeconomic status is an opportunity for the Franklin community. The Book of Proverbs teaches that the community can and should train the child in ways that will benefit the child and the society in which they will live. “Wisdom has a dual benefit. It helps both the young person who is receiving instruction and the community of which the person is to become a productive member in the future.”¹⁹¹

¹⁹⁰ Franklin, “Proverbs,” 244.

¹⁹¹ Franklin, “Proverbs,” 244.

Proverbs provides variety and diversity in the richness of the literary element shared by the sages. The multilayered approaches to share wisdom and the use of the various forms to do so illustrate their time-honored traditions in the Israelite community. The literary works of this wisdom literature is deeply embedded within a historical context that lends insight to the time, places, and people within the community who embrace wisdom and how God creatively moved in their society. The major proverbial themes of wealth, poverty, and morality solidify the character formation and spiritual wisdom required for Franklin's youth to succeed.

Humans tend to create social and economic divisions while pursuing wealth, but "the intent is to qualify and mitigate the social and economic divisions that humans are prone to make" because it denies the humanity that binds humankind to each other and to God.¹⁹² Implementing a proactive solution by training Franklin's youth and offering a start that begins a strong economic foundation will eradicate poverty and increase morality. Franklin's youth can live better and do better. The "prophetic edge" to this pericope is "implicitly calling for socioeconomic justice."¹⁹³ The "wealth gained by wrongdoing, oppressing or taking advantage of the poor stands under God's condemnation."¹⁹⁴

The Book of Proverbs reinforces the importance of the lived experiences within the Franklin community and sharing those experiences with Franklin's youth akin to the ancient Israelite community. This project will reinforce the value of sage wisdom and

¹⁹² Van Leeuwen, "The Book of Proverbs: Introduction, Commentary and Reflections," 197.

¹⁹³ Van Leeuwen, "The Book of Proverbs: Introduction, Commentary and Reflections," 198.

¹⁹⁴ Van Leeuwen, "The Book of Proverbs: Introduction, Commentary and Reflections," 200.

experience to “train up” Franklin’s youth in “their own way” to reap great success.¹⁹⁵

The biblical foundation offers proverbial wisdom to empower Franklin’s youth in the areas of economic empowerment, social action, and social holiness.

¹⁹⁵ Yoder, “Proverbs.”

CHAPTER THREE

HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS

Introduction

This historical foundation will highlight the culture and lives of African Americans during the Reconstruction Era as they built a sense of community, culture, and success for their youth. This historical foundation will review the educational opportunities, economic and political power gained, and their history in this nation, the state of New Jersey specifically, as well as highlights of cornerstone organizations pivotal to the African American community's success. This historical foundation will lay the groundwork and demonstrate the historical context of the power of the Black community despite the astronomical challenges faced in this country and in New Jersey.

The Reconstruction Era from 1865-1877 “attempted to come to terms with its original sin of slavery”¹ “We shall never have a science of history until we have in our colleges men who regard the truth as more important than the defense of the white race . . . ”² This period in American history was to “bring a new social, economic, and

¹ Henry Louis Gates, Jr., *Stony the Road: Reconstruction, White Supremacy, and the Rise of Jim Crow* (New York, NY: Penguin Press, 2019), xv.

² W. E. B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America: An Essay Toward a History of the Part Which Black Folk Played in the Attempt to Reconstruct Democracy in America, 1860-1880* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, Inc., 2007), 594.

political order.”³ The Reconstruction was one of those “rare moments in American history when real change in race relations was possible” and Blacks were seen as human with civil rights, the right to vote, and the ability to enter into the political arena.⁴

The narrative of emancipated Blacks focused on communal power.⁵ After Reconstruction, the community emphasized the power of community and the importance of marriage, home, and the middle-class family unit as the major institutions to sustain the Black community despite the growing appeal for segregation through Jim Crow laws.⁶

Educational opportunities are important for the youth. Alternative positive paths were offered during this historical period. The Freedmen’s Bureau was formed by the Act of Congress in 1865 to aid the emancipated Blacks in their responsibilities as citizens and to support their educational pursuits.⁷ Passage of the Second Morrill Land Grant College Act in 1890 supported the Freedmen’s Bureau’s educational efforts by publicly supporting colleges for African Americans throughout the south.⁸ There was an emphasis on two types of training for the Black community: hand training for the unskilled in the

³ Michael A. Ross, *The Great New Orleans Kidnapping Case: Race, Law, and Justice in the Reconstruction Era* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2015), 6.

⁴ Ross, *The Great New Orleans Kidnapping Case*, 6.

⁵ William L. Andrews, “Slave Narrative,” in *The Oxford Companion to African American Literature*, ed. William Andrews, Frances Smith Foster, and Trudier Harris (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, Inc., 1997), 669.

⁶ Andrews, “Slave Narrative,” 669.

⁷ E. Franklin Frazier, *The Negro Church in America* (New York, NY: Schocken Books Inc., 1974), 45.

⁸ Monroe H. Little, Jr., “Education,” in *The Oxford Companion to African American Literature*, ed. William Andrews, Frances Smith Foster, and Trudier Harris (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, Inc., 1997), 247.

community or mind training for those who were considered Black professionals.⁹ Schools had a moral and religious outlook.¹⁰ Experienced Blacks were needed to buy land and create industrial schools because land and education were needed to establish a greater sense of community despite mandates in the south that none of the mandated free schools were designated for Black children.¹¹

Community-based collaboration and synergy with institutions and organizations who support the vision are required to encourage Black youth. The vision is to encourage civic, moral, and social responsibilities in the community, which was the same focus during the Reconstruction period. Organizations played a pivotal role in community formation for African Americans during the Reconstruction Era. Black churches would “address both the spiritual and the social condition of their people.”¹² In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, “black churches generated extensive programs as part of the larger philosophy of racial self-help.”¹³ The church brought much needed services to the community such as schools, health clinics, publishing houses, libraries, and recreation centers.¹⁴ Black churches were formed to create a communal life and pool economic resources to buy land and build churches.¹⁵ Religious guidance, moral

⁹ Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 213.

¹⁰ Frazier, *The Negro Church in America*, 45.

¹¹ Dorothy Sterling, *Black Foremothers: Three Lives*, 2nd ed. (New York, NY: The Feminist Press at the City University of New York, 1988), 48-50.

¹² Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent*, 173.

¹³ Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent*, 173.

¹⁴ Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent*, 173.

¹⁵ Frazier, *The Negro Church in America*, 39.

discipline, industriousness, and perseverance were necessary for freed Blacks to navigate “the rough waters of freedom” to survive American culture and find success.¹⁶ The historical research regarding education, economics, political power, and organizations in the Black community during this period in the north and the south will reveal how Black communities emerged successfully despite the myriad of obstacles they had to endure.

Education in the South: Importance of Knowledge and Education in the Black Community

There was a high demand for African Americans to have access to knowledge and how to assure that access to knowledge was equally high in demand.¹⁷ African American communities demanded access to literacy, reestablished the family institution, built schools, and built churches.¹⁸ A desire for literacy could not be crushed even though it was outlawed “despite two and a half centuries of bondage and enforced illiteracy.”¹⁹

Emancipated slaves were called freed people and these freed people had two crucial goals which were “to construct their own freedom and secure the fruits of their emancipation.”²⁰ Literacy was of significant interest where classroom sizes in the first

¹⁶ Richard S. Newman, *Freedom's Prophet: Bishop Richard Allen, the AME Church, and the Black Founding Fathers* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2008), 58-59.

¹⁷ Ronald E. Butchart, *Schooling the Freed People: Teaching, Learning, and the Struggle for Black Freedom, 1861-1876* (Walbaun, MT: The University of North Carolina Press, 2010), xvi.

¹⁸ Butchart, *Schooling the Freed People*, 1.

¹⁹ Butchart, *Schooling the Freed People*, 2.

²⁰ Butchart, *Schooling the Freed People*, xvi.

decade after emancipation were one hundred or more students and in 1870s fifty or more per class when more teachers were recruited.²¹

Due to their eagerness to learn, Black settlements organized themselves into learning communities, created schools, recruited anyone who had knowledge and skills, especially the literate members in the community to share their knowledge with the young and the old.²² These Black settlements did not wait for experienced teachers due to their eagerness to learn.²³ Black troops and civilian laborers funded their own adult learning and raised funds to maintain school for Black children in the nearby towns.²⁴ In the mid-1860s, students were thirsty for knowledge that they requested teachers to continue teaching and that there would be no recess, no breaks, no traditional holidays off, and no summer vacations.²⁵

Emancipation, equality, and literacy were necessary for their children's future in equal rights.²⁶ "Some freed people apparently associated political literacy with a relatively narrow sense of citizenship training."²⁷ Emancipation meant to "promote equality, protect autonomy, and provide access to information."²⁸ The emancipated slaves believed that literacy would affirm their emancipation and provide self-protection against

²¹ Butchart, *Schooling the Freed People*, 3.

²² Butchart, *Schooling the Freed People*, 5.

²³ Butchart, *Schooling the Freed People*, 5.

²⁴ Butchart, *Schooling the Freed People*, 6.

²⁵ Butchart, *Schooling the Freed People*, 7.

²⁶ Butchart, *Schooling the Freed People*, 10.

²⁷ Butchart, *Schooling the Freed People*, 10-11.

²⁸ Butchart, *Schooling the Freed People*, 11.

fraud because they could learn how to count money, which all of these fundamental beliefs carried strong political overtones.²⁹ By 1870, northern Blacks received inferior education and they were also barred from public schools which resulted in northern Black illiteracy that ran three to six times the rate of northern white illiteracy.³⁰

Nevertheless, Black teachers were vested in the education of their communities and they taught longer than white teachers from the north and the south.³¹ Their commitment and longevity to the emancipation of Blacks made them the most important of all the teachers.³² The Black community wanted knowledge and those with skills would share their skills to move the community ahead.³³ Teachers desired to teach what they did know to impart their lived experiences to the community and spread the wealth of knowledge.³⁴ Teachers were compelled to move their communities toward equality through education “raising them to a higher social and economic plane, and inscribing them within boundaries previously denied to them.”³⁵

During the Reconstruction, black communities recruited those who would share knowledge, organized classrooms, built and staffed primary schools, secondary schools, normal schools, and seminaries.³⁶ White southern teachers accepted their wages and

²⁹ Butchart, *Schooling the Freed People*, 11-12.

³⁰ Butchart, *Schooling the Freed People*, 19.

³¹ Butchart, *Schooling the Freed People*, 20.

³² Butchart, *Schooling the Freed People*, 44.

³³ Butchart, *Schooling the Freed People*, 26-27.

³⁴ Butchart, *Schooling the Freed People*, 26-27.

³⁵ Butchart, *Schooling the Freed People*, 44.

³⁶ Butchart, *Schooling the Freed People*, 49.

taught due to poverty and destitution, yet they had no regard to advance equality for Blacks in the social order.³⁷ They taught “out of economic desperation and not out of any commitment to intellectual emancipation.”³⁸ “Those laboring in the cause never shared a common vision of the future of African Americans in the nation.”³⁹ After all, “intentions, vision and expectations matter in the serious business of teaching and learning.”⁴⁰

By the mid-1860s, southern whites organized open terrorism which was “aimed at destroying the [B]lack dream of intellectual emancipation through education” because it was “an affront to white supremacy and racial paternalism.”⁴¹ Black franchise and Black education promoted “black autonomy, agency and determination; education free of paternalism was essential to a free ballot and a free ballot was essential to a free and equal education.”⁴² In the South, Black education and Black intellectual aspirations were a threat to the norms of white supremacy life and white supremacists incited violence by burning down schools, burning down teachers’ living quarters, and used physical violence towards all teachers.⁴³ Furthermore, race riots and white terror were aimed at Black churches, Black schools, and Black homes.⁴⁴

³⁷ Butchart, *Schooling the Freed People*, 68, 76.

³⁸ Butchart, *Schooling the Freed People*, 161.

³⁹ Butchart, *Schooling the Freed People*, 122.

⁴⁰ Butchart, *Schooling the Freed People*, 77.

⁴¹ Butchart, *Schooling the Freed People*, 156.

⁴² Butchart, *Schooling the Freed People*, 156.

⁴³ Butchart, *Schooling the Freed People*, 167.

⁴⁴ Butchart, *Schooling the Freed People*, 170.

Education in New Jersey

“In 1881, the New Jersey State legislature passed the toughest anti-segregation law in the Union” outlawing segregated schools.⁴⁵ This measure guaranteed equal access to public facilities and barred discrimination in jury selection.⁴⁶ There was racial equality in public schools.⁴⁷ New Jersey Blacks only filed two lawsuits which led to the 1881 legislation.⁴⁸ Fair Haven, New Jersey, provided a separate school for Blacks that satisfied the local Black community.⁴⁹ Loss of Black teachers was the fear of integration.⁵⁰ “Segregation in white schools created opportunities for black teachers in black communities.”⁵¹ Impoverished Black parents feared abuse, insults, mistreatment, and a lack of proper teaching for their Black children.⁵² Intelligence tests supported their views of Blacks as animals and uncivilized people.⁵³ Therefore “curriculums were designed to give more vocational training to blacks, particularly for poorly paid, menial tasks.”⁵⁴

Black self-help schools were formed and a “coalition of black religious figures, educators, and families founded the New Jersey Industrial and Manual Training School

⁴⁵ Graham Russell and Gao Hodges, *Black New Jersey: 1664 to the Present Day* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2019), 140.

⁴⁶ Russell and Hodges, *Black New Jersey*, 140.

⁴⁷ Russell and Hodges, *Black New Jersey*, 140.

⁴⁸ Russell and Hodges, *Black New Jersey*, 140-141.

⁴⁹ Russell and Hodges, *Black New Jersey*, 141.

⁵⁰ Russell and Hodges, *Black New Jersey*, 141.

⁵¹ Russell and Hodges, *Black New Jersey*, 111.

⁵² Russell and Hodges, *Black New Jersey*, 141.

⁵³ Russell and Hodges, *Black New Jersey*, 142.

⁵⁴ Russell and Hodges, *Black New Jersey*, 142.

for Colored Youth, commonly referred to as the Bordentown School.”⁵⁵ The African Methodist Episcopal Church, led by Reverend Walter A. Rice, founded the school and Black leaders and white administrators were in agreement and fully aligned to proceed.⁵⁶ The state legislature chartered the school in 1884.⁵⁷ In 1886, the school was established.⁵⁸ The state legislature “legalized the church’s right to sell and convey real estate to support the parent organization, the Colored Industrial Educational Association of New Jersey.”⁵⁹

The school was “designed to provide both industrial and academic instruction in a segregated setting to young black boys and girls in a boarding school.”⁶⁰ Its success prompted New Jersey to adopt it as a public school with funding in 1896 using a \$5000 budget.⁶¹ In 1928, the regular high school diplomas were disseminated, and this school received national recognition for vocational training.⁶² The school ended in 1954 after the Brown versus the Board of Education ruling outlawed segregated schools.⁶³

The Bordentown School was based on the teachings of Booker T. Washington, which was focused on a philosophy of hard work, thrift, and personal uplift.⁶⁴ A. P. Miller, pastor of Jersey City’s St. Mark’s African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church,

⁵⁵ Russell and Hodges, *Black New Jersey*, 143.

⁵⁶ Russell and Hodges, *Black New Jersey*, 143.

⁵⁷ Russell and Hodges, *Black New Jersey*, 143.

⁵⁸ Russell and Hodges, *Black New Jersey*, 143.

⁵⁹ Russell and Hodges, *Black New Jersey*, 143.

⁶⁰ Russell and Hodges, *Black New Jersey*, 143.

⁶¹ Russell and Hodges, *Black New Jersey*, 143.

⁶² Russell and Hodges, *Black New Jersey*, 143.

⁶³ Russell and Hodges, *Black New Jersey*, 143.

⁶⁴ Russell and Hodges, *Black New Jersey*, 145.

believed in academic education over vocational education affirming the philosophy of W.E.B. Du Bois, which was an opposing viewpoint to Booker T. Washington.⁶⁵ An ally of Booker T. Washington, T. Thomas Fortune, a notable editor and resident in New Jersey, affirmed his philosophy when speaking to the students in the Bordentown School declaring the importance of “grit, determination, and skills” are the values that young Black men should uphold.⁶⁶

“White colleges and universities occasionally admitted ambitious young blacks, but the numbers on any campus were few.”⁶⁷ More often Blacks found universities closed to them. Princeton University was always closed to the Black community where Woodrow Wilson was openly hostile to Blacks as President of Princeton University.⁶⁸ Smart Blacks went to Lincoln University, which was eighty-five miles from Trenton in Chester County Pennsylvania.⁶⁹ Founded in 1854 as the Ashmun Institute, the country's first college was dedicated to the education of Black people.⁷⁰ The name was changed in 1866 and six men graduated in the first baccalaureate class in 1866.⁷¹

⁶⁵ Russell and Hodges, *Black New Jersey*, 145.

⁶⁶ Russell and Hodges, *Black New Jersey*, 149, 152.

⁶⁷ Russell and Hodges, *Black New Jersey*, 123.

⁶⁸ Russell and Hodges, *Black New Jersey*, 123.

⁶⁹ Russell and Hodges, *Black New Jersey*, 124.

⁷⁰ Russell and Hodges, *Black New Jersey*, 124.

⁷¹ Russell and Hodges, *Black New Jersey*, 124.

Economic and Political Power in the Black Community

Political activity was wrought with challenges for Blacks; therefore Black leaders believed economic progress was critical for success.⁷² Economic self-help and racial unity was needed to succeed due to white oppression.⁷³ “Buy [B]lack” was the mantra to support and grow Black businesses to build up the economy and wealth within the Black community.⁷⁴ America’s racial caste system was based on economic and political power, but self-support would lay the foundation to create a Black middle class despite white segregationist efforts and Jim Crow influences.⁷⁵

Booker T. Washington believed in work study programs, job-skills training, “character, service and the practical value of education.”⁷⁶ He believed that Blacks could achieve success and prosperity through agricultural and industrial training.⁷⁷ As a result of his authority and leadership, Booker T. Washington had a voice in the Black community; and due to his economic and political power, he had “influence over sources of money” and offered recommendations to the executive branch of government who to put in positions of political power and how to build economic wealth in the Black community.⁷⁸ In 1900, he organized the National Negro Business League to deal with issues concerning Black businessmen and racial unity, racial progress, gaining wealth and

⁷² Arvarh E. Strickland and Jerome R. Reich, *The Black American Experience: From Reconstruction to the Present* (New York, NY: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1974), 35.

⁷³ Strickland and Reich, *The Black American Experience*, 35.

⁷⁴ Strickland and Reich, *The Black American Experience*, 35-36.

⁷⁵ Strickland and Reich, *The Black American Experience*, 36.

⁷⁶ Strickland and Reich, *The Black American Experience*, 38.

⁷⁷ Strickland and Reich, *The Black American Experience*, 43.

⁷⁸ Strickland and Reich, *The Black American Experience*, 45.

middle-class values.⁷⁹ Booker T. Washington pushed economic gains at the expense of civil and political rights as well as opportunities for aid at institutions of higher learning because there was dignity and worth in labor hand training in combination with moral, religious and mental education.⁸⁰

William Edward Burghardt Du Bois, commonly referred to as W.E.B. Du Bois, believed in the importance of college trained leaders to build economic and political power.⁸¹ In 1897, Du Bois collaborated with Alexander Crummell and other Black intellectuals and founded the American Negro Academy which was “an association dedicated to black scholarly achievement.”⁸² The Talented Tenth would be the leaders to lift the Black community, strengthen character, increase knowledge and earn a living as college-trained leaders.⁸³ The concept of the Talented Tenth “came to life with the rise of [B]lack Baptist colleges and represented the philosophical basis upon which the missionary educators sought to transform [B]lack America.”⁸⁴

“Without doubt, the Talented Tenth reproduced and disseminated the reigning values of middle class Protestant America, but it nevertheless expressed a race consciousness that united [B]lack men and women in a struggle for racial dignity and

⁷⁹ Strickland and Reich, *The Black American Experience*, 45.

⁸⁰ Page Smith, *The Rise of Industrial America: A People's History of the Post-Reconstruction Era*, Vol. 6 (New York, NY: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1984), 637, 639.

⁸¹ Strickland and Reich, *The Black American Experience*, 46, 52.

⁸² Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America*, 612.

⁸³ Strickland and Reich, *The Black American Experience*, 52.

⁸⁴ Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent*, 25.

self-determination.”⁸⁵ Du Bois was among a “rising generation of the [B]lack elite” that “laid the foundation for the civil rights revolution” which started a movement to advance Blacks in the United States.⁸⁶ Du Bois emphasized the “politics of respectability” where elite educated Blacks embody social and moral values among the middle class to lead the Black community in the following ways: (1) to unite the community, (2) to guard Black boys from crime (3) protect the purity of Black women; and (4) unite organizations to promote policy and action that will advance the Black community.⁸⁷

The Reconstruction period affirmed political power for Blacks. As a result of the Reconstruction Era emancipated Blacks enjoyed their civil rights.⁸⁸ In the north, Black Baptists declared, “we emphasize the fact that it is not social equality we seek, but that we demand the rights of equal opportunity to pursue every occupation that will make life desirable.”⁸⁹ However, this affirmation did not last long. During the Reconstruction, the Black vote had to be controlled, but after the Reconstruction period, the goal was to disenfranchise the Black vote.⁹⁰ This period is known as “Redemption” which “systematically erased” these political gains and white supremacy reigned.⁹¹ “The cry of

⁸⁵ Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent*, 45.

⁸⁶ Gates, Jr., *Stony the Road*, xix.

⁸⁷ Gates, Jr., *Stony the Road*, 194-195.

⁸⁸ Frazier, *The Negro Church in America*, 47.

⁸⁹ Betty Livingston Adams, *Black Women’s Christian Activism: Seeking Social Justice in a Northern Suburb* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2016), 22.

⁹⁰ Butchart, *Schooling the Freed People*, 173.

⁹¹ Gates, Jr., *Stony the Road*, xv.

the bewildered freeman rose, but it was drowned by the Rebel yell.”⁹² The Civil Rights Act of 1875 was ruled unconstitutional in October 1883 by the Supreme Court.⁹³

The Nation: North vs. South

“The first enslaved Africans arrived in the Americas from Africa in the early 1500s. The transatlantic slave trade was made illegal in the United States in 1808 and continued in other parts of the Americas until 1870.”⁹⁴ The number of enslaved Africans varies during these 430 years, but estimates are reasonably calculated between twenty and thirty million.⁹⁵ “After the Civil War, liberated slaves dispersed throughout the United States seeking work and to escape the violence of the post-war South. For several decades many lived relatively peacefully in the East, the Midwest, and the West.”⁹⁶

African Americans were subjugated to the former “slaveholding aristocracy” by means of violence and segregation statutes, also known as Jim Crow laws.”⁹⁷ African Americans in the south were reduced to a lower status due to segregation in public transportation, schools, housing, and a brutal oppressive way of life, such as lynching.⁹⁸ “Plantation owners redefined their former slaves as sharecroppers to maintain harsh and

⁹² Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America*, 147.

⁹³ Dorothy Sterling, *Black Foremothers*, 71.

⁹⁴ Joy DeGruy, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome: America’s Legacy of Enduring Injury and Healing* (Milwaukie, OR: Uptone Press, 2005), 33.

⁹⁵ DeGruy, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome*, 34.

⁹⁶ Richard Rothstein, *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America* (New York, NY: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2017), 39.

⁹⁷ Rothstein, *The Color of Law*, 40.

⁹⁸ Rothstein, *The Color of Law*, 40.

exploitative conditions.”⁹⁹ “It was in this environment that hundreds of thousands of African Americans fled the former confederacy in the first half of the twentieth century.”¹⁰⁰

White southerners wanted to regain control over Blacks.¹⁰¹ Northerners were afraid Blacks would overrun their communities after the Civil War despite the work of Black and white abolitionists solutioning what to do with millions of Blacks who wholly became free.¹⁰² The North and the South creatively solutioned how best “to control” Blacks as they discovered and explored their freedoms while building a sense of community, purpose, and success.

The South solutioned that Black Codes in 1865 would be beneficial in controlling Blacks in the South.¹⁰³ The Black Codes determined what work was allowed for Blacks, the wages plantation owners considered fair, the hours worked, where they worked, and restrictions such as “owning land, voting, suing and sitting on juries.”¹⁰⁴ These codes defined every intimate detail of African American living down to how, when, and where they could travel.¹⁰⁵ Northern states decided their solution was to write exclusionary laws restricting the number of Blacks allowed to stay in their area.¹⁰⁶

⁹⁹ Rothstein, *The Color of Law*, 40.

¹⁰⁰ Rothstein, *The Color of Law*, 41.

¹⁰¹ DeGruy, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome*, 64.

¹⁰² DeGruy, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome*, 64.

¹⁰³ DeGruy, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome*, 64.

¹⁰⁴ DeGruy, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome*, 64.

¹⁰⁵ DeGruy, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome*, 64.

¹⁰⁶ DeGruy, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome*, 64-65.

The Thirteenth Amendment reinforced a cheap source of labor by using “slavery as punishment for a crime.”¹⁰⁷ The southern states leased free Blacks who committed crimes to plantation owners for the duration of their sentence; the state got paid and the businessman received cheap labor.¹⁰⁸ After the emancipation, southern wealth continued to be built on the backs of what amounted to a slave workforce for over one hundred years.¹⁰⁹

The Fourteenth Amendment officially made African Americans citizens of the United States, and it was illegal to deprive them of their life, liberty and property without due process of the law.¹¹⁰ The Fifteenth Amendment ensured Black men had the right to vote.¹¹¹ But Jim Crow laws changed their ability to vote because statutes were passed restricting voting rights such as poll taxes and literacy tests.¹¹² Black voters embraced the Fifteenth Amendment and “gained more political power than ever before” to battle the segregation in Northern states.¹¹³ With the presidential election of Rutherford B. Hayes, the compromise of 1877 came to fruition and the “period of [B]lack liberation known as Reconstruction then came to an end.”¹¹⁴ The south was “redeemed” and political, social

¹⁰⁷ DeGruy, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome*, 66.

¹⁰⁸ DeGruy, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome*, 66.

¹⁰⁹ DeGruy, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome*, 68.

¹¹⁰ DeGruy, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome*, 69.

¹¹¹ DeGruy, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome*, 69.

¹¹² DeGruy, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome*, 69.

¹¹³ Russell and Hodges, *Black New Jersey*, 98.

¹¹⁴ Rothstein, *The Color of Law*, 39-40.

and economic adjustments were fortified.¹¹⁵ Nevertheless, the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments ensured Blacks could no longer be denied their civil and political rights because these two constitutional laws of the land under this reconstruction period supports equality as a constitutional right.¹¹⁶

New Jersey During the Reconstruction Period

There was an increased fear of Blacks moving from the south to the north after the Emancipation Proclamation.¹¹⁷ The Exclusion bill, also called the Banishment Act of 1863, issued in Morris County on March 5, 1863, mandated that “any [B]lack entering the state would be transported to Liberia” but the bill died in the New Jersey Senate.¹¹⁸ New Jersey held a “potent legacy of slavery and an agricultural economy that needed cheap or poorly paid workers.”¹¹⁹

Therefore, New Jersey became the state where the highest number of Black residents lived compared to any other northern state while white New Jerseyans fostered sympathies towards the southern cause.¹²⁰ New Jersey’s economy was doing well during the war and after the war. Newark’s industrial businesses prospered; and in 1861, Newark ranked sixth in the nation based on the value of manufactured products and ranked

¹¹⁵ Kenneth M. Stampp, *The Era of Reconstruction 1865-1877: A revisionist view of one of the most controversial periods in American history* (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1965), 187.

¹¹⁶ Stampp, *The Era of Reconstruction 1865-1877*, 215.

¹¹⁷ Russell and Hodges, *Black New Jersey*, 99-101.

¹¹⁸ Russell and Hodges, *Black New Jersey*, 99-101.

¹¹⁹ Russell and Hodges, *Black New Jersey*, 98.

¹²⁰ Russell and Hodges, *Black New Jersey*, 98.

eleventh in the nation based on the population.¹²¹ In 1914, Booker T. Washington went on a state tour and “congratulated them on their prosperity and self-help, saying that their accomplishments belied critics of [B]lack people.”¹²² Black community life thrived in New Jersey.

Prominent Organizations in the Black Community

These organizations were fundamental cornerstones for the empowerment of the African American community. The Freedmen’s Bureau, the Niagara Movement, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and the Black Church are a few critical organizations created to ensure that the hard work of the Black community was created, built, and sustained for success. These organizations defined the cultural, educational, and political underpinnings necessary to build wealth and success for the next generations of youth in their community despite an unjust world.

After the Civil War, the new Congress implemented a new organization to support the emancipated slaves and was authorized to function for a year under President Abraham Lincoln’s authority; the organization was named the Federal Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands.¹²³ The Freedmen’s Bureau is the name commonly called, and it was designed as an agency to “help newly freed slaves obtain food, shelter, clothing, and education through a network of schools.”¹²⁴ In May 1866, the

¹²¹ Russell and Hodges, *Black New Jersey*, 99.

¹²² Russell and Hodges, *Black New Jersey*, 114.

¹²³ Daniel Brook, *The Accident of Color: A Story of Race in Reconstruction* (New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company Independent Publishers, 2019), 69.

¹²⁴ Brook, *The Accident of Color*, 69.

Freedmen's Bureau was in place to support the transition of emancipated Blacks into communities that would survive despite President Andrew Johnson's veto.¹²⁵ The Freedmen's Bureau played a pivotal role in the education and knowledge adults and children received in the shaping of their emancipated communities.

Despite Booker T. Washington's philosophy of accommodation, W.E.B. Du Bois called militant Blacks together to forge equality and justice for Blacks through the Niagara Movement which began in 1905.¹²⁶ The movement was about protest because Blacks were no longer willing to accept oppression and inferiority to whites.¹²⁷ The Niagara Movement was the "first organized [B]lack protest movement" that challenged the philosophy of accommodation pushed by Booker T. Washington.¹²⁸ W.E.B. Du Bois represented "[B]lack intellectual protest against racial discrimination" and therefore his voice and his scholarship increased the prestige and significance of Black militance protest with the Niagara Movement and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).¹²⁹

The NAACP was founded in 1909.¹³⁰ Du Bois joined the NAACP with "white neo-abolitionist allies" to advance "equitable race relations in America."¹³¹ In 1910, Du Bois was "appointed director of publications and research for [what was] then [the]

¹²⁵ Brook, *The Accident of Color*, 69.

¹²⁶ Strickland and Reich, *The Black American Experience*, 53.

¹²⁷ Strickland and Reich, *The Black American Experience*, 54.

¹²⁸ Strickland and Reich, *The Black American Experience*, 56.

¹²⁹ Strickland and Reich, *The Black American Experience*, 73.

¹³⁰ Gates, Jr., *Stony the Road*, 143.

¹³¹ Gates, Jr., *Stony the Road*, 253-254.

NAACP,” and he was also the “only [B]lack member of the board of directors.”¹³² *The Crisis* is a publication that Du Bois created to set the tone for the political activism and the community’s civil rights initiatives.¹³³ The NAACP was established to “make America safe for democracy” and for “our children to live in a better land” as signs often reflected in their silent protest marches for justice.¹³⁴

The Black church was another formidable organization that embodied the ideals of advancing the Black community. Many African Americans were drawn to Methodist and Baptist denominations yet southern whites considered Black churches as “centers of [B]lack resistance.”¹³⁵ “But for a recently liberated people desperate to rebuild a shattered community, a place to gather and pray and organize came first.”¹³⁶ Black women put in hours and work to sustain the church and congregation because these churches were more than places for prayer and worship; they were also “crucial community resources.”¹³⁷ Churches were schools for daily classes, night classes, basic literacy lessons, and Sunday School to empower the entire community with an opportunity to read.¹³⁸ The Black church represented “spiritual fervor, educational advancement and political ambition.”¹³⁹

¹³² Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America*, 613.

¹³³ Gates, Jr., *Stony the Road*, 254.

¹³⁴ Gates, Jr., *Stony the Road*, 210.

¹³⁵ Douglas R. Egerton, *The Wars of Reconstruction: The Brief, Violent History of America’s Most Progressive Era* (New York: NY: Bloomsbury Press, 2014), 139.

¹³⁶ Egerton, *The Wars of Reconstruction*, 140.

¹³⁷ Egerton, *The Wars of Reconstruction*, 141.

¹³⁸ Egerton, *The Wars of Reconstruction*, 142-143.

¹³⁹ Egerton, *The Wars of Reconstruction*, 144.

Black churches emphasized human equality, human dignity, self-respect, and racial self-determination to drive out socioeconomic forces and oppression against the Black community.¹⁴⁰ “Women were crucial to broadening the public arm of the church and making it the most powerful institution of racial self-help in the African American community.”¹⁴¹ Black churches provided programs to promote social reform such as “vocational training, relief to the needy, kindergartens, day nurseries, industrial schools, job placement, and recreation for youth” before civic organizations were formed like the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the National Urban League in 1911.¹⁴² The Black church established “schools, newspapers, and other institutions of racial self-help.”¹⁴³

The Baptist faith tradition emphasized the importance of the church providing job placement services and recreation to deter the youth in the community from idleness and crime.¹⁴⁴ In 1912, Baptist churches “advocated for the use of buildings as recreational outlets for youth.”¹⁴⁵ Idle activity was a problem for racial self-help.¹⁴⁶ In the north, the rate of black crime increased after the Civil War due to poverty and ignorance.¹⁴⁷ Crime, poverty, and ignorance were major issues in the Black urban community life, and white

¹⁴⁰ Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent*, 53.

¹⁴¹ Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent*, 1.

¹⁴² Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent*, 174.

¹⁴³ Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent*, 49.

¹⁴⁴ Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent*, 177.

¹⁴⁵ Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent*, 177.

¹⁴⁶ Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent*, 211.

¹⁴⁷ Smith, *The Rise of Industrial America*, 629.

politicians used these issues as “instruments of injustice and oppression.”¹⁴⁸ Northerners found how difficult the job was to earn a decent living given the competition and discrimination they faced.¹⁴⁹

The social gospel movement in the Protestant faith tradition during the early 1900s emphasized the importance of establishing social order for the individual person as well as society overall in terms of industrial and social problems.¹⁵⁰ This social gospel movement was “the greatest wave of social justice activism ever generated by the ecumenical churches, and it was a species of Christian socialism.”¹⁵¹ “The social gospel that arose in [B]lack churches was a struggle for a new abolitionism.”¹⁵² The Black social gospel “arose as a response to the abandonment of Reconstruction and an upsurge of racial terrorism” and “enlisted the churches in the struggle for racial justice” and to fight against racial oppression and racial violence.¹⁵³ Moreover, the Black social gospel also considered the “civil rights movement,” supported “[B]lack church racial justice activism” and civil rights activism since the late 1800s and grew out of the abolitionist

¹⁴⁸ Smith, *The Rise of Industrial America*, 629-631.

¹⁴⁹ Smith, *The Rise of Industrial America*, 634.

¹⁵⁰ Donald K. Gorrell, *The Age of Social Responsibility: The Social Gospel in the Progressive Era, 1900-1920* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1988), 4, 16.

¹⁵¹ Gary Dorrien, “The Social Gospel in Black and White, Then and Now,” Cooperative Metropolitan Ministries of Greater Boston, June 6, 2020, Canopy Forum, <https://canopyforum.org/2020/07/20/the-social-gospel-in-black-and-white-then-and-now/>.

¹⁵² Dorrien, “The Social Gospel in Black and White, Then and Now.”

¹⁵³ Dorrien, “The Social Gospel in Black and White, Then and Now.”

period.¹⁵⁴ The early Black social gospel was compelled to address economic injustices and the racial divisions and racial oppression that plagued the north and the south.¹⁵⁵ This Black social gospel “paved the way to the civil rights movement, the greatest story we have in this country, providing the social justice theology of the civil rights movement.”¹⁵⁶

Conclusion

Black Baptists, during this era, declared then and perhaps should still stand now: “God made of one blood all nations . . . we do recognize *individual* superiority, but we do not recognize *race* superiority.”¹⁵⁷ White supremacy is considered “the demon of caste prejudice.”¹⁵⁸ The ideas of Jim Crow migrated north.¹⁵⁹ “Northern blacks saw themselves as fighting a ‘southern problem.’”¹⁶⁰ “The tidal wave of white supremacy fueled violence and transgressed divine law.”¹⁶¹ “Black leadership, racial politics, and moral mediation”

¹⁵⁴ Gary Dorrien, “Recovering the Black Social Gospel: The figures, conflicts, and ideas that forged ‘the new abolition,’” *Harvard Divinity Bulletin* 43, no. 3 (Summer/Autumn 2015), <https://bulletin-archive.hds.harvard.edu/articles/summerautumn2015/recovering-black-social-gospel>.

¹⁵⁵ Dorrien, “Recovering the Black Social Gospel.”

¹⁵⁶ Dorrien, “The Social Gospel in Black and White, Then and Now.”

¹⁵⁷ Adams, *Black Women’s Christian Activism*, 22.

¹⁵⁸ Adams, *Black Women’s Christian Activism*, 21.

¹⁵⁹ Adams, *Black Women’s Christian Activism*, 37.

¹⁶⁰ Adams, *Black Women’s Christian Activism*, 37.

¹⁶¹ Adams, *Black Women’s Christian Activism*, 22.

are the “moral authority within the [B]lack community” offering the wisdom required to be responsible as a liberated people.¹⁶²

Public stewardship of Black morality and the Black community must “embrace moral uplift as a means of elevating the race” in the court of public opinion.¹⁶³ During this era there was concern how Blacks were perceived by white America and therefore “[B]lack consciousness-raising activities would change white views of African Americans.”¹⁶⁴ However, the idea of Black consciousness-raising activities to affirm and embolden the Black community to excel is a forward-thinking ideal because “[B]lack freedom struggle is a vital part of the American experiment.”¹⁶⁵

The Reconstruction Era has had profound impacts on the “memories of the religious and moral practices of Black elites” to the “detriment of the masses” in the Black community “who were not able to incorporate the etiquette and manners associated with the ‘politics of respectability.’”¹⁶⁶ African American elites who called for Black self-help participating in civic life while embracing the “politics of respectability” is both aspirational and destructive for the poor and disinherited masses in the Black community.¹⁶⁷ The embrace of polite and gentle pursuits of thrift, industry, self-control,

¹⁶² Newman, *Freedom’s Prophet*, 151-152.

¹⁶³ Newman, *Freedom’s Prophet*, 152.

¹⁶⁴ Newman, *Freedom’s Prophet*, 297.

¹⁶⁵ Newman, *Freedom’s Prophet*, 298.

¹⁶⁶ Walter Earl Fluker, *The Ground Has Shifted: The Future of the Black Church in Post-Racial America* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2016), 35.

¹⁶⁷ Fluker, *The Ground Has Shifted*, 36.

piety, temperance and work ethic were necessary for successful citizenship and economic independence.¹⁶⁸

The power of the Black community continued to thrive towards a life of freedom in pursuit of knowledge, education, economic, and political opportunities. The Reconstruction Era was the genesis of the freedoms for African Americans to explore growth, learning, and success in the United States of America. The Reconstruction Era is foundational to this project because the community of African Americans over 100 years ago modeled the same understanding required today. They built communities across the United States of America that cultivated a culture of success and hard work with few resources. The power of community leaders sharing their lived experiences through mentoring, hands-on learning, and knowledge sharing fortified the values for generations of African American youth in this nation. This historical foundation illuminated the sources of creativity and sound solutions that benefited the African American community to ensure the success of their youth over 100 years ago; and this tradition must continue into the twenty first century.

¹⁶⁸ Fluker, *The Ground Has Shifted*, 37.

CHAPTER FOUR

THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

Introduction

Theological authority in prophetic leadership and prophetic activism supports the foundation of this spiritual mentorship project in Franklin Township. The theological framework for this project will affirm prophetic activism and analyze the idea of social and civic responsibilities in the Franklin Township community. Black liberation theology, womanism, and the hermeneutic of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement will support the underpinnings of this project and advocate for civic and social change in this community's next generation of productive citizens.

Black liberation theology is the understanding of how God impacts the liberation of Blacks in society. James Cone emphasizes that political liberation from white racism in the United States is “fundamental to the work of [B]lack liberation theologians” and asserts that “salvation is not passive but instead involves active participation in the struggle against oppression.”¹ To understand Black liberation theology is to first understand the value and importance of Black liberation:

Black liberation requires understanding the origins and nature of Black oppression and racism more generally. Most importantly, it requires a strategy, some sense of

¹ Michelle A. Gonzalez, *A Critical Introduction to Religion in the Americas: Bridging the Liberation Theology and Religious Studies Divide* (New York, NY: NYU Press, 2014), 55-56, muse.jhu.edu/book/76322. This source is taken from James Cone, *God of the Oppressed* (San Francisco, CA: Harper San Francisco, 1975).

how we get from the current situation to the future. Perhaps at its most basic level, Black liberation implies a world where Black people can live in peace, without the constant threat of the social, economic, and political woes of a society that places almost no value on the vast majority of Black lives. It would mean living in a world where Black lives matter. While it is true that when Black people get free, everyone gets free. Black people in America cannot ‘get free’ alone. In that sense, Black liberation is bound up with the project of human liberation and social transformation.²

Black liberation theology further evaluates that “for centuries, religion has been used to legitimize discrimination in the United States.”³ Black liberation theologians argue that African Americans refused to accept this interpretation of Christianity and that enslaved persons in this country transformed Christianity into a liberative religion that justified their dignity and worth through social justice, liberation, and spirituality.⁴

The hermeneutics of the Black Lives Matter movement details the struggle of Black youth affirming their voices and connection to society despite the challenges and obstacles of a system steeped in oppression towards marginalized communities. Alicia Garza, a co-founder of BLM, described #BlackLivesMatter as a movement and “an ideological and political intervention in a world where Black lives are systematically and intentionally targeted for demise.”⁵ The idea that Black lives do matter not only calls for intervention but affirmation. Garza asserts that this movement is “an affirmation of Black folks’ contributions to this society, our humanity, and our resilience in the face of deadly oppression.”⁶

² Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, *From #Blacklivesmatter to Black Liberation* (Chicago, IL: Haymarket Books, 2016), 194.

³ Gonzalez, *A Critical Introduction to Religion in the Americas*, 51.

⁴ Gonzalez, *A Critical Introduction to Religion in the Americas*, 51-52.

⁵ Taylor, *From #Blacklivesmatter to Black Liberation*, 151.

⁶ Taylor, *From #Blacklivesmatter to Black Liberation*, 151.

The power of the Black Lives Matter movement developed its roots in womanism. The influence of womanism takes shape based on the power and struggle of Black women's voices in society. As a womanist, the assertion that community continues to be built and fortified on the shoulders of Black women is an understatement. According to many leaders in the Black Lives Matter movement, the sheroes akin to bell hooks, Angela Davis, Audre Lorde, Paula Giddings, Barbara Smith, Beth Richie, Cathy Cohen, Beverly Guy-Sheftall, Barbara Ransby, Ella Baker, and Toni Morrison demonstrated the "intellectual building blocks of their collective consciousness, augmented by their own lived experiences and the wisdom"⁷ of our ancestors to understand the realities of society, the dreams of being in community, and how to survive and thrive while inspiring critical resistance for the Black community.⁸

Womanism explores the power and strength of Black women and how Black women examine the power and strength of God in the African American community. Womanist theology is "multidialogistic, liturgical, pedagogical, and theological."⁹ Womanist theology "examines the dynamics of racism, sexism, and classism in African-American women's lives."¹⁰ Black women's culture, stories, lived experiences, and narratives are primary resources for womanist theology, and "womanist theologians

⁷ Barbara Ransby, *Making All Black Lives Matter: Reimagining Freedom in the Twenty-First Century*, 1st ed., Vol. 6 (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2018), 107, doi-org.dtl.idm.oclc.org/10.1525/9780520966116.

⁸ Ransby, *Making All Black Lives Matter*, 107.

⁹ Gonzalez, *A Critical Introduction to Religion in the Americas*, 52-53.

¹⁰ Gonzalez, *A Critical Introduction to Religion in the Americas*, 53.

highlight Black women's creativity"¹¹ despite societal chaos and systemic oppression which emphasizes "God as Spirit and its presence in culture and creation."¹²

These theological frameworks support the idea of pushing an agenda of liberation, justice, and equity that supports the change needed to inspire and motivate a sense of true community and valuing all citizens and their contributions to society. This foundation paper will explore these three theological themes of liberation. The theological issues section will highlight the reimagining of community and activism. The theological relevance section will detail reimagining the church in community and reimagining church leadership in community.

Theological Themes

The idea of liberation holds a tremendous amount of weight in theological circles. Cornel West affirms that "the study of African American religion within a religious life in the United States that has lost its prophetic edge"¹³ requires people to figure out how to "navigate the tension of the modern world and the weight of historical religious traditions."¹⁴ Black liberation theology and womanism are theological frameworks rooted in Black culture and religious tradition. Both themes can continue to push the prophetic edge of transformation and change when there is a willingness to reimagine.

¹¹ Gonzalez, *A Critical Introduction to Religion in the Americas*, 53.

¹² Gonzalez, *A Critical Introduction to Religion in the Americas*, 53.

¹³ Gonzalez, *A Critical Introduction to Religion in the Americas*, 66-67.

¹⁴ Gonzalez, *A Critical Introduction to Religion in the Americas*, 66-67.

African American theology is rooted in the Civil Rights movement, the Black Power movement of the 60s and 70s, Black religious experiences, a history of systemic oppression since the enslavement era, and “shaped by theological categories like hope, eschatology, liberation, and salvation.”¹⁵ African Americans “created and nurtured a culture against the backdrop of racial, social, sexual, and economic exploitation and injustice”¹⁶ and used Black culture as a “rich resource for reflection on the nature of God-talk as it emerges in and through [B]lack lives.”¹⁷ When culture and theology connect, both produces a powerful testament to the ways in which Black folk give credence to notions of the divine and how theological reflection is engaged.¹⁸ According to James Cone, W.E.B. DuBois was a man of great faith who exercised “literary passion and creative theological insight”¹⁹ in his writings, poems and stories with theological and biblical insights where he “prefigured the theological and christological insights about the Black God and Black Christ in [B]lack liberation theology during the late 1960s and early ‘70s.”²⁰

¹⁵ Emilie M. Townes, “Cultural Boundaries and African American Theology,” in *The Oxford Handbook of African American Theology*, ed. Anthony B. Pinn and Katie G. Cannon (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2014), 1, 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199755653.013.0034.

¹⁶ Townes, “Cultural Boundaries and African American Theology,” 3.

¹⁷ Townes, “Cultural Boundaries and African American Theology,” 4.

¹⁸ Townes, “Cultural Boundaries and African American Theology,” 4.

¹⁹ James Cone, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2011), 101.

²⁰ Cone, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*, 101.

Freedom is the “indispensable condition for the quest for human completion”²¹ to regain their humanity as they struggle for their liberation.²² Martin Luther King, Jr. said, “Never forget that freedom is not something that is voluntarily given by the oppressor. It is something that must be demanded by the oppressed.”²³ Power is the “strength required to bring about social, political or economic changes”²⁴ and is “necessary in order to implement the demands of love and justice.”²⁵ James Cone reiterates that the “cross is the burden we must bear in order to attain freedom.”²⁶ “Black liberation theology emerged out of Black people’s struggle with nonviolence (Christianity) and self-defense (Black Power).”²⁷ Over time, Black liberation theology became a scholarly academic examination of logic and reasoning and would omit the “emotional and visual power”²⁸ that makes up the lived religious experiences of African Americans.²⁹ Black liberation theology continues to examine race, class, and socioeconomic diversity among the African American community in its expansive yet narrow lens.³⁰

²¹ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 50th ed (New York, NY: Bloomsbury Academic Bloomsbury Publishing Inc., 2018), 47.

²² Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 47-48.

²³ Martin Luther King, Jr., *The Radical King*, ed. Cornel West (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2015), 251.

²⁴ Martin Luther King, Jr., *Where Do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community?* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1968, 2010), 37.

²⁵ King, Jr., *Where Do We Go from Here*, 37.

²⁶ Cone, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*, 151.

²⁷ Cone, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*, 149.

²⁸ Edward J. Blum and Paul Harvey, *The Color of Christ: The Son of God and the Saga of Race in America* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 224.

²⁹ Blum and Harvey, *The Color of Christ*, 223-224.

³⁰ Blum and Harvey, *The Color of Christ*, 241-242.

Womanist theology emerged during the 1980s to examine the plight of Black women in the United States and the African diaspora addressing the “wholeness of all persons across gender, race, class, age, and ability.”³¹ In her 1983 collection, *In Search of Our Mother's Gardens: Womanist Prose*, Alice Walker – poet, novelist, activist – coined the term womanism exploring its definition and “examines relationality steeped in love; qualifies womanist strength, maturity, willfulness, and audacious spirit.”³² Katie G. Cannon, Delores Williams, Jacqueline Grant, Cheryl Townsend Gilkes, and Emilie Townes used womanism “to expose oppression and to correct some of the systemic and personal challenges to [B]lack people worldwide” and “ultimately organizes toward the love, justice-making and transformation of all people.”³³ Womanist theology is a “corrective toward love as activism, to affect transformation and sociocultural, political, physical, mental, spiritual, personal, and communal wholeness.”³⁴ With moral reasoning and practical ethics, womanist thought signifies the wisdom inherent in the Black community based on the elders who survived a history of injustice from Jim Crow laws and “white hegemonic hypocrisy apparent in the wake of poverty and unemployment.”³⁵

³¹ Cheryl Kirk-Duggan, “Womanist Theology as a Corrective to African American Theology,” in *The Oxford Handbook of African American Theology*, ed. Katie G. Cannon and Anthony B. Pinn (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2014), 1, 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199755653.013.0019.

³² Kirk-Duggan, “Womanist Theology as a Corrective to African American Theology,” 1.

³³ Kirk-Duggan, “Womanist Theology as a Corrective to African American Theology,” 2.

³⁴ Kirk-Duggan, “Womanist Theology as a Corrective to African American Theology,” 2.

³⁵ Kirk-Duggan, “Womanist Theology as a Corrective to African American Theology,” 4.

Theological Issues

Reimagining Community

There is a Third Reconstruction of America asserts William Barber. These efforts push a moral agenda, an economic agenda, and a justice agenda to create a more perfect union that assures the rights for all of God's human creation, up to and including the Black community.³⁶ There needs to be a "multiethnic democracy that America strives to become."³⁷ The prophetic activist must be a moral witness protesting these insecurities and injustices in the land. The proclaimed word of God puts on flesh and moves by the call to act because we are fighting for the soul of America.³⁸ The prophetic activist must fight and will fight.

Ministry requires rising to the occasion to help the least of these in community. Pastor Karen Mosby-Avery in Chicago, Illinois, declares, "we cannot continue to bear the name Christian, if we will not join God in eliminating marginalized people's suffering, if we will not join Christ in rebelling against injustice."³⁹ Social holiness is the order that must be established to heal disenfranchised communities. Raphael Warnock affirms that "too many preachers and their churches have embraced a distorted theology of personal prosperity that is disengaged from the needs of the poor who are often surrounding the

³⁶ William J. Barber, II. with Liz Theoharis and Rick Lowery, *Revive Us Again: Vision and Action in Moral Organizing* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2018), 144.

³⁷ William J. Barber, II. with Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove, *The Third Reconstruction: How a Moral Movement Is Overcoming the Politics of Division and Fear* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2016), 103.

³⁸ Barber, II., *The Third Reconstruction*, 106.

³⁹ Raphael Warnock, *The Divided Mind of the Black Church: Theology, Piety & Public Witness* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2014), 151.

church and is disconnected from any theological vision of communal liberation.”⁴⁰ This idea of personal piety requires more discourse on the importance of social holiness.

William Barber affirms, “We are called to be a movement for wholeness in a broken world and to stand for justice, so help us God.”⁴¹ God will use the rejected for spiritual and social revival to “reconstruct the social life of America.”⁴² When we all come together we can redeem the soul of America.⁴³ “We can become an instrument of redemption and reconstruction.”⁴⁴ The church cannot do this in its own strength but in the strength of Christ Jesus because the Spirit of the Lord is upon the church.⁴⁵

African American women must stand on a theology that will “address and confront all of the sins that oppressed them and the [B]lack community.”⁴⁶ African American women bear the responsibility to nurture and care for the community and family. The role of the Black mother as a community leader, “primary caretaker,” and “socializer” affirms their importance as asserted by Charisse Jones and Kumea Shorter-Gooden:

Our research shows that Black mothers spend significant energy shifting emotionally and psychologically, constantly anticipating and coping with the assaults that their children encounter. They buffer, filter, deflect, defend, bolster,

⁴⁰ Warnock, *The Divided Mind of the Black Church*, 151-152.

⁴¹ William J. Barber, II., *We are Called To Be A Movement* (New York, NY: Workman Publishing Co., Inc., 2020), 24.

⁴² Barber, II., *We are Called To Be A Movement*, 56.

⁴³ Barber, II., *We are Called To Be A Movement*, 59.

⁴⁴ Barber, II., *We are Called To Be A Movement*, 60.

⁴⁵ Barber, II., *We are Called To Be A Movement*, 61.

⁴⁶ Kimberly P. Johnson, *The Womanist Preacher: Proclaiming Womanist Rhetoric from the Pulpit* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2017), xviii.

fortify, and embrace — even as they wrestle with their own sadness, fear, and anger about what their children must endure as Black people in this society.⁴⁷

Katie Geneva Cannon, Jaquelyn Grant, and Delores Williams, as founders of womanist theology, “discovered that economic exploitation, discrimination, racism, sexism, and segregation require African American women to construct their own set of values and virtues that will allow them to conduct themselves with moral integrity”⁴⁸ and this mindset positions the next generation to follow in this same construct to thrive in the Black community and society overall.⁴⁹

Being in community is “the intergenerational sharing of spiritual values and belief systems”⁵⁰ with the active practice of theology and ethics.⁵¹ Teresa Fry Brown argues that,

African diasporan women worked to instill concepts they believed God bequeathed: justice, freedom, and equality both personally and socially — which have political, judicial, economic, and spiritual ramifications. Black women worked in the arenas of [B]lack family, [B]lack community, and [B]lack church to inspire and instill moral values, the same arenas where [B]lack women experience liberation and oppression.⁵²

Examining the community and then reimagining the community based on those shared values and beliefs will invoke God’s power to move and act as a community.

⁴⁷ Charise Jones and Kumea Shorter-Gooden, *Shifting: The Double Lives of Black Women in America* (New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, Inc., 2003), 237.

⁴⁸ Johnson, *The Womanist Preacher*, xviii.

⁴⁹ Johnson, *The Womanist Preacher*, xviii.

⁵⁰ Kirk-Duggan, “Womanist Theology as a Corrective to African American Theology,” 5.

⁵¹ Kirk-Duggan, “Womanist Theology as a Corrective to African American Theology,” 5.

⁵² Kirk-Duggan, “Womanist Theology as a Corrective to African American Theology,” 5.

Reimagining Activism

There is a prophetic movement in the land. Prophetic activists are searching for transformative justice, which advances and elevates the ideas of restorative justice, to address the suffering experienced by marginalized, demonized, and isolated communities. As a prophetic activist, divine authority is given to those led to boldly transform community as this prophetic movement continues. Obery Hendricks referenced the two greatest commandments of love, which is to love God and love your neighbor while asserting that Jesus is a political revolutionist and the ultimate activist.⁵³

In a real sense, Jesus was the ultimate activist in that he dedicated his entire being to struggling to bring the world in line with the vision of love, liberation and justice given to him by God. Yet his activism was born of his spirituality. Jesus defined spirituality holistically, as both vertical (love and service to God) and horizontal (love and service to humanity). In other words, for him true spirituality consisted of an active commitment to health, wholeness, and justice for all God's children as the highest expression of our love for God. Jesus articulated his holistic conception of spirituality in this way: 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind . . .' and 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself' (Mt 22:37-39).⁵⁴

The ministry of social activism that Martin Luther King, Jr. professed is on the margins compared to Christian's personal piety.⁵⁵ Social transformation at its core should be the vocation, the calling, of the church.⁵⁶ Raphael Warnock proclaims, a church must be vocal about these social issues; otherwise, the church "loses its prophetic edge,

⁵³ Obery M. Hendricks, Jr., *The Politics of Jesus: Rediscovering the True Revolutionary Nature of Jesus' Teachings and How They Have Been Corrupted* (New York, NY: Three Leaves Press, 2006), 93-95.

⁵⁴ Hendricks, Jr., *The Politics of Jesus*, 93.

⁵⁵ Warnock, *The Divided Mind of the Black Church*, 176-177.

⁵⁶ Warnock, *The Divided Mind of the Black Church*, 176-177.

theological integrity, and moral credibility”⁵⁷ to be “a prophetic church and liberationist community.”⁵⁸

Faith-based activism is needed in times of crisis.⁵⁹ An expression of this faith is mirrored in priestly activism, pastoral activism, and prophetic activism. According to D. Anthony Everett, priestly activism addresses concerns inside the church; pastoral activism admonishes the community to come into the fold; and prophetic activism goes outside the church and outside of one’s comfort zone into the community to advocate for and be that transforming change.⁶⁰ This role of the prophetic activist and prophetic preacher requires a commitment of lifelong learning. As “iron sharpens iron,” prophetic activists are required to be lifelong learners and keep a pulse on the heart of the community assessing their needs and be the solution-bearer.

Martin Luther King, Jr. “died organizing a nonviolent revolution to push America toward a social ethos grounded in love.”⁶¹ Fortifying the youth in the Franklin community to see their larger purpose in the grandeur of life after graduation is necessary spiritual work and an act of prophetic love. Samuel Proctor affirmed the importance of education and shares how faith is required to achieve greater success and purpose in life. Proctor affirmed that a strong faith is required,

[to] retain a sense of personal worth and aspire to do well. The truly educated person, in my view, is never content until a satisfactory, operational answer is

⁵⁷ Warnock, *The Divided Mind of the Black Church*, 188.

⁵⁸ Warnock, *The Divided Mind of the Black Church*, 189.

⁵⁹ D. Anthony Everett, “Ministry in Times of Crisis,” Prophetic Activism: From the Cross to the Community, Webex Focus Group Plenary, United Theological Seminary, Dayton, Ohio, August 24, 2020.

⁶⁰ D. Anthony Everett, “Ministry in Times of Crisis,” Prophetic Activism: From the Cross to the Community, Webex Focus Group Plenary, United Theological Seminary, Dayton, Ohio, August 24, 2020.

⁶¹ Barber, II., *We are Called To Be A Movement*, 87.

found to the questions of purpose and destiny. In our early years, school is largely in control of the life of the mind and the world of ideas. But eventually we must turn our focus outward and upward to look for our own larger frame of reference. Religion brings our quest for purpose and direction to closure and our soul to ease by revealing our place in the scheme of things.⁶²

The oppressed must acknowledge the need to fight for their liberation and view this fight as “an act of love opposing the lovelessness which lies at the heart of the oppressors’ violence, lovelessness even when clothed in false generosity.”⁶³ D. Anthony Everett boldly declared, “Prophetic activism is spiritual and cultural. Prophetic activism is wokeness in the ministry.”⁶⁴ The community must stay “woke” and remain “woke” to the possibilities of their potential despite the systems that may oppress. William Barber declares “theological malpractice” if there is no critique of social justice, economic justice, and civil justice because America is dealing with “moral issues — what is right and what is wrong.”⁶⁵

Martin Luther King, Jr. explains the dynamics of power, love, and justice when he proclaims “that power without love is reckless and abusive and that love without power is sentimental and anemic. Power at its best is love implementing the demands of justice. Justice at its best is love correcting everything that stands against love.”⁶⁶ Obery Hendricks defines justice in the mind of Jesus. Justice is defined and asserted by Jesus as,

[T]he basis for struggling to vanquish degrading social practices and oppressive political structures for all time to come. His repeated emphasis on the ‘kingdom of

⁶² Samuel DeWitt Proctor, *The Substance of Things Hoped For: A Memoir of African-American Faith* (Valley Forge, PA: Valley Forge Press, 1994), 215-216.

⁶³ Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 45.

⁶⁴ D. Anthony Everett, “Ministry in Times of Crisis,” Prophetic Activism: From the Cross to the Community, Webex Focus Group Plenary, United Theological Seminary, Dayton, Ohio, October 22, 2020.

⁶⁵ Barber, II., *Revive Us Again*, 147.

⁶⁶ King, Jr., *Where Do We Go from Here*, 38.

God,' that is, the sole rulership of the God of justice; his unrelenting focus on freedom and liberation, on the right of all to have abundance in every sphere of inner life and outer life; and his ever present concern for the poor and unprotected together constitute a platform for liberation that far exceeds in its scope even the most ambitious secular political agenda.⁶⁷

“Love that does not satisfy justice is no love at all. Love at its best is justice concretized. Love is unconditional. It is not conditional upon one’s staying in his place or watering down his demands in order to be considered respectable.”⁶⁸

This prophetic movement using the lens of D. Anthony Everett’s prophetic activism within the framework of William Barber’s Third Reconstruction recognizes how these movements can flow together. William Barber asserts that “intersectionality creates the opportunity to fundamentally redirect America” and “reconstruct this moral movement mentality” to successfully “shift the conscience of the nation.”⁶⁹

Theological Relevance

Reimagining Church in Community

The church is the “voice of moral and spiritual authority on earth.”⁷⁰ Yet, the church has been “an accomplice in structuring racism into the architecture of American society.”⁷¹ The church must “recapture its prophetic zeal.”⁷² Otherwise, it will become an

⁶⁷ Hendricks, Jr., *The Politics of Jesus*, 95.

⁶⁸ King, Jr., *Where Do We Go from Here*, 95.

⁶⁹ Barber, II., *The Third Reconstruction*, 122-123.

⁷⁰ King, Jr., *Where Do We Go from Here*, 101.

⁷¹ King, Jr., *Where Do We Go from Here*, 101.

⁷² King, Jr., *Where Do We Go from Here*, 102.

“irrelevant social club without moral or spiritual authority.”⁷³ Every human is an “heir to a legacy of dignity and worth,”⁷⁴ and this inherent dignity is embedded in the concept of “the image of God”⁷⁵ in the Judeo-Christian tradition.⁷⁶ Martin Luther King, Jr. confirms that “human worth lies in relatedness to God”⁷⁷ and humankind is valuable because humans have value to God and this value is not based on intellect, racial origin or social position.⁷⁸ Since humankind is made in the image and likeness of God, then all humankind is “worthy of dignity and respect, and we are empowered.”⁷⁹ All humankind must be respected with dignity and worth because all humankind and nations are interdependent, interrelated, and “tied to a single garment of destiny.”⁸⁰ The practice of social justice and “uncommon grace”⁸¹ from the church to the community requires divine anointing.⁸²

The church as a social institution provides the network for people to “share information, organize around issues of common concern, and mobilize for collective

⁷³ King, Jr., *Where Do We Go from Here*, 102.

⁷⁴ King, Jr., *Where Do We Go from Here*, 102.

⁷⁵ King, Jr., *Where Do We Go from Here*, 102.

⁷⁶ King, Jr., *Where Do We Go from Here*, 102.

⁷⁷ King, Jr., *Where Do We Go from Here*, 102.

⁷⁸ King, Jr., *Where Do We Go from Here*, 102.

⁷⁹ Barber, II., *Revive Us Again*, 9.

⁸⁰ Martin Luther King, Jr., “*In a Single Garment of Destiny*”: *A Global Vision of Justice*, ed. Lewis V. Baldwin (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2012), 73-118, 149.

⁸¹ Barber, II., *Revive Us Again*, 19.

⁸² Barber, II., *Revive Us Again*, 19.

action . . . An organizer is always building relationships of trust.”⁸³ The church must reemphasize the message of the prophet Micah and that is to “reclaim moral language”⁸⁴ in the community which is to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly before God.⁸⁵ “The church itself was called to be a liberation movement and a sign of what God’s justice and freedom can mean for all people.”⁸⁶ This type of movement can be reflected in the community because “that kind of liberation is the true work of the spirit through the church.”⁸⁷

Jesus came to “reconstruct everything” and “reconstruction starts with the poor.”⁸⁸ Martin Luther King, Jr. said that all work has dignity if you are “engaged in work that serves humanity and is for the building of humanity; it has dignity, and it has worth.”⁸⁹ Through the politics of love and grace, Christians are called to “be a movement for wholeness in a broken world and to stand for justice.”⁹⁰ “The prophetic power of the Bible makes one commit to the work for justice.”⁹¹ Christians are “instruments of redemption and reconstruction.”⁹² Christians must reimagine church and community in this new era of digital technology. Social media is the platform used to share “news of

⁸³ Barber, II., *The Third Reconstruction*, 7.

⁸⁴ Barber, II., *The Third Reconstruction*, 11.

⁸⁵ Barber, II., *The Third Reconstruction*, 11.

⁸⁶ Barber, II., *The Third Reconstruction*, 36.

⁸⁷ Barber, II., *The Third Reconstruction*, 37.

⁸⁸ Barber, II., *We are Called To Be A Movement*, 10-11.

⁸⁹ King, Jr., *The Radical King*, 246.

⁹⁰ Barber, II., *We are Called To Be A Movement*, 13-24.

⁹¹ Barber II., *We are Called To Be A Movement*, 3.

⁹² Barber, II., *We are Called To Be A Movement*, 60.

outrageous injustices”⁹³ where “people are called to action”⁹⁴ and people can put oppression on trial in the “public square of this generation.”⁹⁵

Transformation and change “require directness of purpose, dedication and above all humility of mind and spirit”⁹⁶ and strong leadership. “Visible leadership in Black communities during the mid-century civil rights era was largely composed of male faith leaders”⁹⁷ while Black women were sidelined or pushed to the back as invisible contributors.⁹⁸ “The Black Power movement collapsed” because these male leaders were killed, assassinated, marginalized or assimilated into conventional politics.”⁹⁹ Organizing is about building relationships and building power. Power enables the community to change the situations that hurt the community.¹⁰⁰ “A movement is successful if it transforms the dynamics and relationships of power — from power being concentrated in the hands of a few to power being held by many.”¹⁰¹ The Black church was at the core of the movement, but the “politics of respectability” minimized their prophetic voice in the community and the Black Lives Matter movement today.¹⁰²

⁹³ Ransby, *Making All Black Lives Matter*, 100.

⁹⁴ Ransby, *Making All Black Lives Matter*, 100.

⁹⁵ Ransby, *Making All Black Lives Matter*, 101.

⁹⁶ King, Jr., “*In a Single Garment of Destiny*,” 141.

⁹⁷ Alicia Garza, *The Purpose of Power: How We Come Together When We Fall Apart* (New York, NY: One World, 2020), 42.

⁹⁸ Garza, *The Purpose of Power*, 42.

⁹⁹ Garza, *The Purpose of Power*, 42.

¹⁰⁰ Garza, *The Purpose of Power*, 56.

¹⁰¹ Garza, *The Purpose of Power*, 56.

¹⁰² Garza, *The Purpose of Power*, 131-132.

The Black Lives Matter movement shifted how Black people no longer cared about how they were perceived, respected or not respected; the “new common sense” approach to exploring the “pervasive nature of anti-Blackness and internalized white supremacy among Black communities”¹⁰³ changed with this generation and the Black Lives Matter movement.¹⁰⁴ Founders Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors, and Opal Tometi formed Black Lives Matter to inspire the next generation of activists and socially conscious youth to reimagine their faith and how Black communities can live with dignity and a stronger faith in each other and society despite the systems of oppression that continue to traumatize and degrade Black people.¹⁰⁵ With this movement, “the inherent worth of Black lives”¹⁰⁶ was no longer challenged based on how someone lived.

Black Lives Matter “created political and cultural space for a more expansive version of Blackness to emerge.”¹⁰⁷ “Black people did not have to wear their Sunday best to be considered worthy of respect, dignity, and humanity.”¹⁰⁸ Alicia Garza emphasizes the importance of closing the gap between the practice of faith-based values and the statement of faith-based values within the church to be impactful and effective.¹⁰⁹ “Our movements must reflect the best of who we are and who we can be.”¹¹⁰ To build a

¹⁰³ Garza, *The Purpose of Power*, 133.

¹⁰⁴ Garza, *The Purpose of Power*, 133.

¹⁰⁵ Olga M. Segura, *Birth of a Movement: Black Lives Matter and the Catholic Church* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2021), xv, 4, 12.

¹⁰⁶ Garza, *The Purpose of Power*, 134.

¹⁰⁷ Garza, *The Purpose of Power*, 136.

¹⁰⁸ Garza, *The Purpose of Power*, 136.

¹⁰⁹ Segura, *Birth of a Movement*, 20.

¹¹⁰ Garza, *The Purpose of Power*, 135.

movement and to build power and to build relationships centers around “growing your tribe across differences to focus on a common set of goals”¹¹¹ solving problems and seeking change. “Black lives are uniquely and systematically attacked”¹¹² in America. “Black Lives Matter addresses its own necessity in the phrase itself: Black lives do not have value or merit in our society.”¹¹³ The decentralized leadership model of organizers with millions of leaders empowers people in communities to lead and this strategically emboldens, disrupts, and affects change.¹¹⁴

Today’s “youth are in particular need of tools to foster a sense of identity and human flourishing and [B]lack must provide them.”¹¹⁵ According to Eddie Glaude, the Black church is one of the social institutions, many religious and nonreligious, that addresses the prophetic social justice needs of today’s youth in the Black community.¹¹⁶ The social issues facing the Black church and the Black community today are a “rupture in the soul of a nation and in the church,”¹¹⁷ and movements like Black Lives Matter mirror the fact that we are in a “struggle not just for ourselves but for the soul of a nation and the world.”¹¹⁸ “There are legions of issues and challenges that threaten the future of

¹¹¹ Garza, *The Purpose of Power*, 136.

¹¹² Garza, *The Purpose of Power*, 156.

¹¹³ Garza, *The Purpose of Power*, 156.

¹¹⁴ Garza, *The Purpose of Power*, 162-163, 165.

¹¹⁵ Walter Earl Fluker, *The Ground Has Shifted: The Future of the Black Church in Post-Racial America* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2016), 18.

¹¹⁶ Fluker, *The Ground Has Shifted*, 19.

¹¹⁷ Fluker, *The Ground Has Shifted*, 167.

¹¹⁸ Fluker, *The Ground Has Shifted*, 167.

our churches and communities.”¹¹⁹ “It is only in the embrace of the dynamism of the Holy Ghost symbolized by the experience of Pentecost that we can see and prophesy deliverance for our people and oppressed peoples of the world.”¹²⁰ “The public debate regarding structural versus behavioral causes of the plight of [B]lack youth has proven unhelpful in resolving the deep-seated psychological, social, and spiritual issues of young [B]lack people.”¹²¹

A more balanced approach is best in order to build personal and social capital found in churches, religious and civic institutions, families, and schools, which are “mainstays of youth’s social, spiritual and moral development.”¹²² A sense of personal agency and low-skilled manual work recognition, respect, and a sense of reverence come from work opportunities.¹²³ To develop emerging ethical leaders in local communities youth must develop personal character, societal civility, and a sense of spirit for and with community.¹²⁴ Churches must collaborate with the youth because “[B]lack youth need to possess the cultural knowledge, procedural skills, and values required if they are to be citizens of a liberal democratic society.”¹²⁵ The Black church has the opportunity to elevate the conscious of youth.¹²⁶ Similar to Black Lives Matter, church leaders involved

¹¹⁹ Fluker, *The Ground Has Shifted*, 167.

¹²⁰ Fluker, *The Ground Has Shifted*, 170.

¹²¹ Fluker, *The Ground Has Shifted*, 203.

¹²² Fluker, *The Ground Has Shifted*, 203.

¹²³ Fluker, *The Ground Has Shifted*, 205.

¹²⁴ Fluker, *The Ground Has Shifted*, 226.

¹²⁵ Fluker, *The Ground Has Shifted*, 227.

¹²⁶ Fluker, *The Ground Has Shifted*, 228.

in social and political transformation should commit to a “a sense of wholeness and integrity within the self, society and the world.”¹²⁷ “Theological constructions that address young [B]lack men and women have formal affinity with post-[B]lackness as a quest for identity, authenticity, and agency.”¹²⁸ “The future of [B]lack churches in the United States will depend largely on how we minister to the most disproportionately impacted group in our communities, [B]lack youth.”¹²⁹ In order to reimagine the church in community we must not forget our Black youth for “without our youth, we no longer have churches nor a reason for their existence.”¹³⁰

Reimagining Church Leadership in Community

What is the power and authority of the church? The time of prophetic activism is now. The souls of the people need hope. It is incumbent upon church leadership to reimagine hope and offer hope to the youth and the community. To address “economic injustice and poverty,”¹³¹ then the church “must reconstruct the heart of our democracy.”¹³²

¹²⁷ Fluker, *The Ground Has Shifted*, 232.

¹²⁸ Fluker, *The Ground Has Shifted*, 233.

¹²⁹ Fluker, *The Ground Has Shifted*, 237.

¹³⁰ Fluker, *The Ground Has Shifted*, 238.

¹³¹ Barber, II., *Revive Us Again*, 201.

¹³² Barber, II., *Revive Us Again*, 208.

“Truth telling is critical to the mandate of prophetic hope. Only the truth can set us free.”¹³³ We is the most important word in the vocabulary of justice,¹³⁴ and coming together becomes the instrument of redemption and justice.¹³⁵ “A moral agenda builds up an economic democracy through full employment, living wages, and the alleviation of disparate unemployment.”¹³⁶

Kelly Brown Douglas, a womanist theologian, asserts,

[I]f humanity is created in God’s image, then authentic humanity emerges in the incarnated Jesus. When people, motivated by God’s love, enter into relations with divine creation, their humanity is actualized. Knowledge of God’s love moves us to share love with other persons, realizing one’s own divinity. When people opt to reflect God’s image in the world, they exist as agents of love.¹³⁷

“Love leaders understand at a deeper level how to bring out the best in people and empower them to perform at higher levels of performance than anyone believes is possible.”¹³⁸ Love leadership offers a legacy and is a brand of leadership that is humane and offers purpose and meaning to the leader and those following the love leadership model.¹³⁹ Leaders lead with love and managers lead with fear.¹⁴⁰ Leaders “create long-term relationship built on caring for others and in service of a larger good”¹⁴¹ which

¹³³ Barber, II., *Revive Us Again*, 70.

¹³⁴ Barber, II., *Revive Us Again*, 124.

¹³⁵ Barber, II., *Revive Us Again*, 124-135.

¹³⁶ Barber, II., *Revive Us Again*, 180.

¹³⁷ Kirk-Duggan, “Womanist Theology as a Corrective to African American Theology,” 5.

¹³⁸ John Hope Bryant, *Love Leadership: The New Way to Lead in a Fear-Based World* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2009), xii.

¹³⁹ Bryant, *Love Leadership*, 18-19.

¹⁴⁰ Bryant, *Love Leadership*, 62.

¹⁴¹ Bryant, *Love Leadership*, 78.

leads to prosperity for all. Love leadership will help you achieve the accumulation of money and wealth — spiritual wealth, intellectual wealth, and emotional wealth.¹⁴² Love leadership is a “long-term commitment to serving others” and to “serve without expecting anything in return because it’s the right thing to do.”¹⁴³ Good leadership is leading with authenticity, service to others, and “leading with the purpose of doing good for others.”¹⁴⁴ Dorothy Height said, “I think leadership helps to release people. Many people are much more than they think they are, but they need someone to help them realize themselves. And once these people begin to move together and work together, they release new energy and new possibility within themselves.”¹⁴⁵

“Leadership is taking people where they need to go and yet resist going.

Leadership is energizing a community of people toward their own transformation in order to accomplish a shared mission in the face of a changing world.”¹⁴⁶ “Transformational leadership is built on leaders making good, wise, discerning decisions for the sake of both the health and the mission of the community – decisions that reinforce the missional conviction – and this requires leaders who are able to stay calm.”¹⁴⁷ In order to create communities of innovative change, leaders must be agents of change and possess spiritual

¹⁴² Bryant, *Love Leadership*, 107.

¹⁴³ Bryant, *Love Leadership*, 142.

¹⁴⁴ Bryant, *Love Leadership*, 158.

¹⁴⁵ Bryant, *Love Leadership*, 176-177.

¹⁴⁶ Tod Bolsinger, *Canoeing the Mountains: Christian Leadership in Uncharted Territory* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 124.

¹⁴⁷ Bolsinger, *Canoeing the Mountains*, 145.

integrity, cultural and internal sensitivity, global discernment, and hospitable engagement.¹⁴⁸

Understanding God as the liberator, “hungering and thirsting for justice is nothing less than the continued longing for God to come and set things right.”¹⁴⁹ “To hunger for justice is to hope that the things that cause us to mourn will not get the last word.”¹⁵⁰ To church leadership, Jesus asks to see those “whom society has declared as secondary”¹⁵¹ and to see the “brokenness in society and to articulate an alternative vision”¹⁵² on how to live and receive a place of priority.¹⁵³ “In a society where Black lives have historically been undervalued, we can know that we have an advocate in the person of Christ.”¹⁵⁴ “Jesus’ ministry and the kingdom that he embodies involve nothing less than the creation of a new world in which the marginalized are healed spiritually, economically and psychologically.”¹⁵⁵ “God’s vision for this people is not for the elimination of ethnicity to form a colorblind uniformity of sanctified blandness. Instead, God sees the creation of a community of different cultures united by faith.”¹⁵⁶ “The very diversity of cultures is a

¹⁴⁸ J. Elvin Sadler, *Pot Changers: Innovative Change in an Ever-Changing World Principles of Leadership for Organizational Effectiveness* (Matthews, NC: KDP Publishing LLC, 2020), 23-26.

¹⁴⁹ Esau McCaulley, *Reading While Black: African American Biblical Interpretation as an Exercise in Hope* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2020), 19, 66.

¹⁵⁰ McCaulley, *Reading While Black*, 66.

¹⁵¹ McCaulley, *Reading While Black*, 92.

¹⁵² McCaulley, *Reading While Black*, 66.

¹⁵³ McCaulley, *Reading While Black*, 66, 92.

¹⁵⁴ McCaulley, *Reading While Black*, 92-93.

¹⁵⁵ McCaulley, *Reading While Black*, 94.

¹⁵⁶ McCaulley, *Reading While Black*, 106.

manifestation of God's glory."¹⁵⁷ "The Bible calls on us to develop a theological imagination within which we can see the world as a community and not a collection of hostilities."¹⁵⁸

Conclusion

"When your eye is trained to look for it, there is plenty of evidence that there is a faith proposition that operates, and that gets results."¹⁵⁹ The Franklin community can build a brighter future for the adolescents transitioning into adulthood based on this theological foundation of liberation, womanism and the value of Black lives in New Jersey. "There are some values that abide. They have no racial or ethnic label."¹⁶⁰ Equality is possible, but we must "define the optimum human condition and call everyone to embrace it."¹⁶¹

As a womanist, this assertion is true: "It would be odd indeed for God to create men and women equally, and then reveal God's truth only to males. Historically the [B]lack church has been our great liberating agent, and it is past time to liberate its women completely."¹⁶² African American women as "bearers of culture" and "givers of life" and "teachers of the future" sustain and nurture the Black community despite the turmoil of the past four hundred years and offer hope for a brighter future to the Black

¹⁵⁷ McCaulley, *Reading While Black*, 116.

¹⁵⁸ McCaulley, *Reading While Black*, 129.

¹⁵⁹ Proctor, *The Substance of Things Hoped For*, 130-131.

¹⁶⁰ Proctor, *The Substance of Things Hoped For*, 152.

¹⁶¹ Proctor, *The Substance of Things Hoped For*, 152.

¹⁶² Proctor, *The Substance of Things Hoped For*, 158.

community.¹⁶³ The ability to groom and build hope for the next generation of citizens in Franklin Township is part of the divine theological call.

“The truly educated person, in my view, is never content until a satisfactory, operational answer is found to the questions of purpose and destiny.”¹⁶⁴ “Religion brings our quest for purpose and direction to closure and our soul to ease by revealing our place in the scheme of things.”¹⁶⁵ “The success that the middle-class Black population has achieved has a direct relationship to hard work, personal pride, and deep faith in a future filled with meaning and purpose.”¹⁶⁶ “We need to aspire to a network of relationships that will affirm all of us in our rich diversity and decency.”¹⁶⁷ America is prepared for a “new paradigm of the human family, one that respects everyone’s innate worth that seeks to cultivate human potential and self-esteem, and that affirms the principles of justice, freedom, and equality.”¹⁶⁸ “By faith we know we can accomplish our goals with integrity. We will help America to redefine herself.”¹⁶⁹ “Ashes will be turned to beauty by a power beyond our own fragile will. Black people have a long history of standing up to the impossible, and making the possible real.”¹⁷⁰ “Where we are today demands that we make choices that are worth living and dying for, choices deserving of our best efforts,

¹⁶³ Diana L. Hayes, *Standing in the Shoes My Mother Made: A Womanist Theology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2011), 165.

¹⁶⁴ Proctor, *The Substance of Things Hoped For*, 215.

¹⁶⁵ Proctor, *The Substance of Things Hoped For*, 216.

¹⁶⁶ Proctor, *The Substance of Things Hoped For*, 225.

¹⁶⁷ Proctor, *The Substance of Things Hoped For*, 236.

¹⁶⁸ Proctor, *The Substance of Things Hoped For*, 230.

¹⁶⁹ Proctor, *The Substance of Things Hoped For*, 242.

¹⁷⁰ Proctor, *The Substance of Things Hoped For*, 242-243.

those that have the best chance of steering us toward the optimum human condition, a genuine community.”¹⁷¹ “By our faith in the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen, a new human paradigm can be achieved.”¹⁷² Like Fannie Lou Hamer, this “bold, daring, audacious and outrageous” womanist accepts the challenge to promote the change needed in this African American community.¹⁷³

¹⁷¹ Proctor, *The Substance of Things Hoped For*, 242.

¹⁷² Proctor, *The Substance of Things Hoped For*, 243.

¹⁷³ Hayes, *Standing in the Shoes My Mother Made*, 165.

CHAPTER FIVE

INTERDISCIPLINARY FOUNDATIONS

Some of the most creative work today requires the collaboration of scientists and theologians to understand how humanity and modern science work effectively to promote change in society.¹ Ian Barbour proposes four different types of typology to examine the ways in which people relate to science and religion; they are conflict, independence, dialogue, and integration.² This paper will focus on the typology of integration, because according to Barbour, integration is “a more systematic and extensive kind of partnership between science and religion.”³ This partnership between science and religion will “seek a closer integration of these two disciplines.”⁴ “There are dangers if either scientific or religious ideas are distorted to fit a preconceived synthesis that claims to encompass all reality. We must always keep in mind the rich diversity of our experience.”⁵ We distort reality “if we force it into a neat intellectual system. A coherent vision of reality must

¹ Ian G. Barbour, *When Science Meets Religion*, 1st ed. (San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco, 2000), xiv.

² Barbour, *When Science Meets Religion*, 1-3.

³ Barbour, *When Science Meets Religion*, 3.

⁴ Barbour, *When Science Meets Religion*, 3.

⁵ Barbour, *When Science Meets Religion*, 37.

allow for the distinctiveness of differing types of experience.”⁶ Therefore, the interdisciplinary theory for this project will examine the Critical Race Theory (CRT) in the field of sociology and how humans connect, interconnect, create communities, and establish productive lives in a diverse society.

This interdisciplinary theory will function to examine social justice and sociology. “American sociology has a social justice tradition that has not been fully recognized.”⁷ An overall view of a critical race sociology confirms that Critical Race Theory (CRT) is relevant for empirical inquiry in the field of sociology and CRT explains ongoing racial inequality in sociological theories that maintain white supremacy and racism when studying race in social life.⁸ “Most sociologists identify social justice, social change, and a desire to make a better world as the motives”⁹ to pursue sociology and affect change because sociology has “a long history of debating value-free objective sociology versus an engaged sociology aimed at change for a better world.”¹⁰

Four tenets key to a sociological adaptation of CRT include,

understanding racism as a permanent feature of American society, racism working through intersecting structures of domination, racism’s formation through white supremacy, and emphasizing narrative storytelling to ground understanding of racial oppression in the experiences of the marginalized.¹¹

⁶ Barbour, *When Science Meets Religion*, 38.

⁷ Mary Romero, “Sociology Engaged in Social Justice,” *American Sociological Review* 85, no. 1 (February 2020): 4, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0003122419893677>.

⁸ Michelle Christian, Louise Seamster, and Victor Ray, “New Directions in Critical Race Theory and Sociology: Racism, White Supremacy, and Resistance,” *American Behavioral Scientist* 63, no. 13 (November 2019): 1731-1732, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764219842623>.

⁹ Romero, “Sociology Engaged in Social Justice,” 3.

¹⁰ Romero, “Sociology Engaged in Social Justice,” 3.

¹¹ Christian, Seamster, and Ray, “New Directions in Critical Race Theory and Sociology,” 1732.

Pioneering critical race sociologists include Mary Romero and Eduardo Bonilla-Silva.¹² Current leading scholars like Tanya Golash-Boza, Wendy Leo Moore, Joyce Bell, David Embrick, and Glenn Bracey are main contributors to the “sociologically minded critical race research community.”¹³ These sociologists and scholars gather as an emerging community to advance the development of the Critical Race and Ethnic Studies program at University of Tennessee-Knoxville, which is a “programmatic hub for sociological critical race scholarship.”¹⁴

More sociological work is needed to expand the contributions from a CRT lens.¹⁵ When sociology adopts CRT perspectives, then sociology can overcome “racial ignorance,” which is defined as “an epistemological position that seeks to deny the importance of racialized structures, despite strong empirical evidence of their enduring nature.”¹⁶ This interdisciplinary theory will impact this project in this significant way. Despite the longstanding racial structures that impact every aspect of society and how race is formalized in the very fabric of American society, Franklin’s Black youth will not fall prey to society’s racial ignorance, and Franklin’s youth will be empowered to develop counter-narratives that will change their outlook and position them to affect positive social change and experience social transformation in their community.

¹² Christian, Seamster, and Ray, “New Directions in Critical Race Theory and Sociology,” 1732.

¹³ Christian, Seamster, and Ray, “New Directions in Critical Race Theory and Sociology,” 1732.

¹⁴ Christian, Seamster, and Ray, “New Directions in Critical Race Theory and Sociology,” 1732.

¹⁵ Christian, Seamster, and Ray, “New Directions in Critical Race Theory and Sociology,” 1733.

¹⁶ Christian, Seamster, and Ray, “New Directions in Critical Race Theory and Sociology,” 1733.

Interdisciplinary Theory

Critical Race studies explores the struggles for freedom and equality and how the legacy of slavery has impacted the lives of African Americans.¹⁷ Critical Race Theory “challenges the ways in which race and racial power are constructed and represented in American legal culture, and more generally, in American society as a whole.”¹⁸ Critical Race Theory defines “race as a social hierarchy.”¹⁹ “Under this realist point of view, those who struggle against racism – in academia, the streets, or the legal system – should have no illusions about the persistence of racial inequality.”²⁰ CRT has examined white supremacy and how the “subordination of people of color was created, maintained, and produced through the law.”²¹

CRT is birthed from the “Black radical tradition of antiracist activism.”²² Derrick Bell was instrumental in “fighting racist legal doctrine and used that experience to shape the field.”²³ Legal scholars, and many who are legal scholars of color, founded CRT in the legal academy, but many other disciplines see the need to expand “critical race

¹⁷ DoVeanna S. Fulton, “Foreword,” in *Critical Race Studies Across Disciplines: Resisting Racism Through Scholactivism*, eds. Jonathan Chism, Stacie Craft DeFreitas, Vida Robertson, and David Ryden (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books The Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group, Inc., 2021), 11.

¹⁸ Jonathan Chism, “Introduction,” in *Critical Race Studies Across Disciplines: Resisting Racism Through Scholactivism*, eds. Jonathan Chism, Stacie Craft DeFreitas, Vida Robertson, and David Ryden (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books The Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group, Inc., 2021), 16.

¹⁹ Christian, Seamster, and Ray, “New Directions in Critical Race Theory and Sociology,” 1733.

²⁰ Christian, Seamster, and Ray, “New Directions in Critical Race Theory and Sociology,” 1733.

²¹ Christian, Seamster, and Ray, “New Directions in Critical Race Theory and Sociology,” 1735.

²² Christian, Seamster, and Ray, “New Directions in Critical Race Theory and Sociology,” 1735.

²³ Christian, Seamster, and Ray, “New Directions in Critical Race Theory and Sociology,” 1735.

thought” to inform the “ethical commitments of scholars” across multiple disciplines while examining race, racism, systems of oppression and how this all impacts society.²⁴ CRT was founded on the “bond between race and law,” but other schools of thought use CRT to examine how racism permeates the social fabric of America and is pervasive in institutions, structures, and cultural modes of expression through the lens of history, social sciences, humanities, political science, public health, education, psychology, and religious studies.²⁵

This foundation paper will examine Critical Race Theory in the discipline of sociology. To better understand the impact of Critical Race Theory within the discipline of sociology, an overview of sociology is important. Sociology is an applied field in the traditional broad disciplinary category of Social Sciences.²⁶ Sociology has a worldview explained as follows,

Sociology views the world as a social reality that includes the range and nature of the relationships that exist between people in any given society. Sociology is particularly interested in voices of various subcultures, analysis of institutions, and how bureaucracies and vested interests shape life.²⁷

Sociology studies “the social nature of societies and of human interactions within them (social structure, culture, demography, crime).”²⁸ Understanding that different disciplines deal with different epistemologies, sociology has a different concept of knowledge, how

²⁴ Chism, “Introduction,” 16.

²⁵ Chism, “Introduction,” 28.

²⁶ Allen F. Repko, Rick Szostak, and Michelle Phillips Buchberger, *Introduction to Interdisciplinary Studies*, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2020), 122-123.

²⁷ Repko, Szostak, and Buchberger, *Introduction to Interdisciplinary Studies*, 131.

²⁸ Repko, Szostak, and Buchberger, *Introduction to Interdisciplinary Studies*, 134.

knowledge is applied and how sociologists study the nature and basis of their field of knowledge.²⁹ In fact, disciplines in social science tend to embrace more than one epistemology and most social scientists agree that knowledge is generated by “personal experience, values, theories, hypotheses, logical models, and empirical evidence.”³⁰ Modernist or positivist sociology shares a rationalist epistemology like the other social sciences; however, rationalist epistemology is “opposed by critical social theory, a theory cluster that includes Marxism, critical theory, feminist theory, postmodernism, multiculturalism, and cultural studies.”³¹ Nevertheless, these approaches all assume that “knowledge is socially constructed” and “exists in history that can change the course of history if properly applied.”³²

Theory and the Theme

Social sciences assume “there is some order to society.”³³ Social sciences “study the world of sentient, willful humans who imagine future and alternative states to the world as it currently is and change their patterns of behavior in light of anticipated or desired futures as well as present realities.”³⁴ Understanding the importance of social science establishing order in society, this project will begin to set order in the lives of

²⁹ Repko, Szostak, and Buchberger, *Introduction to Interdisciplinary Studies*, 136-137.

³⁰ Repko, Szostak, and Buchberger, *Introduction to Interdisciplinary Studies*, 138.

³¹ Repko, Szostak, and Buchberger, *Introduction to Interdisciplinary Studies*, 138.

³² Repko, Szostak, and Buchberger, *Introduction to Interdisciplinary Studies*, 138.

³³ Repko, Szostak, and Buchberger, *Introduction to Interdisciplinary Studies*, 141.

³⁴ Repko, Szostak, and Buchberger, *Introduction to Interdisciplinary Studies*, 142.

Franklin's Black youth who are transitioning into adulthood to envision a new transformed reality and how to desire a new future against their present realities despite the challenges they will face.

Theory dominates the scholarly discourse within the discipline and drives the questions asked and insight that stem from the problems examined.³⁵ Therefore, Critical Race Theory examined through the lens of sociology will help to understand current realities while anticipating a desired future state for this project. The most common methods, which is defined as procedures, processes, and techniques to conduct, organize, and present research, used in the field of sociology include surveys, interviews, and observations of social groups.³⁶ Sociologists also tend to use qualitative methods and approaches to gather information such as "making visual observations and interviewing to record information."³⁷ Looking through the lens of sociology requires the sociologist to study the phenomena, its epistemology and how truth is known and validated, assumptions made about the world, basic concepts and theories made about the causes and behaviors, the methods used, and how the data is collected.³⁸

"The critical race theory (CRT) movement is a collection of activists and scholars engaged in studying and transforming the relationship among race, racism, and power."³⁹

³⁵ Repko, Szostak, and Buchberger, *Introduction to Interdisciplinary Studies*, 144.

³⁶ Repko, Szostak, and Buchberger, *Introduction to Interdisciplinary Studies*, 145-146.

³⁷ Repko, Szostak, and Buchberger, *Introduction to Interdisciplinary Studies*, 149.

³⁸ Repko, Szostak, and Buchberger, *Introduction to Interdisciplinary Studies*, 385.

³⁹ Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction*, 3rd ed. (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2017), 3, <https://doi-org.dtl.idm.oclc.org/10.2307/j.ctt1ggijn3>.

Derrick Bell “became the movement’s intellectual father figure” and he “authored many of CRT’s foundational texts.”⁴⁰ Alan Freeman, Kimberlé Crenshaw, Angela Harris, Cheryl Harris, Charles Lawrence, Mari Matsuda, and Patricia Williams were also foundational to the CRT movement.⁴¹ Critical Race Theory is causing significant national discourse and challenging thinkers in all disciplines “to reconsider the ways they conceptualize equality, civil rights, and national security. Critical race theory is taught at many law schools and has spread to other disciplines and countries.”⁴²

“Unlike some academic disciplines, critical race theory contains an activist dimension. It tries not only to understand our social situation but to change it, setting out not only to ascertain how society organizes itself along racial lines and hierarchies but to transform it for the better.”⁴³ Critical Race Theory, when applied to social science, enables communities to understand how race and racism works in society, the legal system and every other discipline and social issue impacted by racism in this country. Recent social cognition research examines “racial mechanics,”⁴⁴ which are “the ways in which race alters intrapersonal, interpersonal, and intergroup interactions”⁴⁵ and the “results are stunning, reproducible, and valid by traditional scientific metrics”⁴⁶ because

⁴⁰ Delgado and Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory*, 6.

⁴¹ Delgado and Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory*, 6.

⁴² Delgado and Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory*, 113.

⁴³ Delgado and Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory*, 8.

⁴⁴ Jerry Kang, “Trojan Horses of Race,” in *Critical Race Theory: The Cutting Edge* by Jean Stefancic, ed. Richard Delgado (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2013), 212, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/dtl/detail.action?docID=1210896>.

⁴⁵ Kang, “Trojan Horses of Race,” 212.

⁴⁶ Kang, “Trojan Horses of Race,” 212.

these results “seriously challenge current understandings of our ‘rational’ selves and our interrelations.”⁴⁷ “Crucial findings from the field of social cognition with emphasis on the recent ‘implicit bias’ literature demonstrate that most [people] have implicit biases in the form of negative beliefs (stereotypes) and attitudes (prejudice) against racial minorities.”⁴⁸ CRT scholars “agree that theory and practice need to work together”⁴⁹ and that street activists “need new theories to challenge a social order that treats minority communities and the poor so badly”⁵⁰ while “theorists need the infusion of energy that comes from exposure to real-world problems”⁵¹ that promotes scholarship grounded in reality.⁵²

Theory and the Bible

“Some aspects of critical race theory will be accepted by society’s mainstream and halls of power,”⁵³ such as narrative turn, storytelling scholarship and critique of merit, “while other parts of it will continue to meet resistance.”⁵⁴ Critical Race Theory uses storytelling and counternarratives to “dismantle oppressive hierarchical arrangements to decenter the ‘grand narratives’ of the hegemonic establishment, and

⁴⁷ Kang, “Trojan Horses of Race,” 212.

⁴⁸ Kang, “Trojan Horses of Race,” 212.

⁴⁹ Delgado and Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory*, 105.

⁵⁰ Delgado and Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory*, 105.

⁵¹ Delgado and Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory*, 105.

⁵² Delgado and Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory*, 105.

⁵³ Delgado and Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory*, 159.

⁵⁴ Delgado and Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory*, 159.

awaken dominant groups to the ethical necessity of working to advance an equitable and inclusive society where all people can live in harmony.”⁵⁵ “Critical race theorists have built on everyday experiences with perspective, viewpoint, and the power of stories and persuasion to come to a deeper understanding of how Americans see race.”⁵⁶ “Legal storytellers, such as Derrick Bell and Patricia Williams, draw on a long history with roots going back to the slave narratives.”⁵⁷

The importance of storytelling and sharing stories from diverse varied backgrounds emphasizes that “well told stories describing the reality of [B]lack and brown lives can help readers to bridge the gap between their worlds and those of others.”⁵⁸ “Engaging stories can help us understand what life is like for others and invite the reader into a new and unfamiliar world.”⁵⁹ Storytelling gives those who are vulnerable and victims of structural racism a voice, “reveal that other people have similar experiences”⁶⁰ and once this story is “named, it can be combated”⁶¹ to “begin a process of correction in our system of beliefs and categories by calling attention to neglected evidence and reminding readers of our common humanity.”⁶² “One important aspect of systemic racism is that most whites, including major decision makers in the private and public sectors, have never listened seriously and regularly to the experienced and pained

⁵⁵ Chism, “Introduction,” 28.

⁵⁶ Delgado and Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory*, 45.

⁵⁷ Delgado and Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory*, 45.

⁵⁸ Delgado and Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory*, 49.

⁵⁹ Delgado and Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory*, 49.

⁶⁰ Delgado and Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory*, 51.

⁶¹ Delgado and Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory*, 51.

⁶² Delgado and Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory*, 51.

voices and racism shaped narratives of Americans of color.”⁶³ Creating situations where whites can encounter these narratives is very important, for equal-status interracial interaction often forces some reframing.⁶⁴

The book of Proverbs was fundamentally about telling stories of virtue and how the community comes together to understand the needs of everyone in the community. “Proverbs’ understanding of justice is linked closely to the way of life of certain virtuous and vicious characters described by this rhetoric — the wicked and the just, the foolish and wise.”⁶⁵ Different verses in “Proverbs sketch profiles of virtue and vice corresponding to the characters of just and wicked persons.”⁶⁶ Virtues to speak rightly and honestly, care for the community, understand the value of wealth, and just toward the poor are rightly oriented to the divine, as well as toward justice which is to possess and exercise a full range of (social) virtues.⁶⁷ When those who stand on the side of virtue prevail, then justice reigns and care for everyone in the community prevails.

Human oppression can be dismantled and changed because “what is created by human action can be dismantled by assertive human action where there is the will to bring significant change.”⁶⁸ To expect major societal change for a racial utopia and a just

⁶³ Joe R. Feagin, *The White Racial Frame: Centuries of Racial Framing and Counter-Framing*, 2nd ed. (New York, NY: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2013), 209, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/dtl/detail.action?docID=1355975>.

⁶⁴ Feagin, *The White Racial Frame*, 209.

⁶⁵ Timothy J. Sandoval, “Prophetic and Proverbial Justice: Amos, Proverbs, and Intertextuality,” in *Second Wave Intertextuality and the Hebrew Bible*, ed. Marianne Grohmann and Hyun Chul Paul Kim (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature Press, 2019), 145, <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvhn0933.11>.

⁶⁶ Sandoval, “Prophetic and Proverbial Justice,” 145.

⁶⁷ Sandoval, “Prophetic and Proverbial Justice,” 145.

⁶⁸ Feagin, *The White Racial Frame*, 225.

society may be difficult since “the historical record shows that *Homo sapiens* [have] been quite capable of inventing and recreating forms of inequality and social categories to do so.”⁶⁹ Eduardo Bonilla-Silva declares that “no fundamental social change, less so a utopian project, will emerge independent of social movements.”⁷⁰ This project will embrace storytelling and counternarratives as a means to resist and dismantle false negative dominant narratives that pervade our society about Black people. This project will attempt to reset expectations for a social change that leans towards a movement for social transformation and not merely a moment of change for a finite moment in time.

Theory and Theology

“Religious scholars do not frequently make direct references to CRT and have published very little on CRT explicitly.”⁷¹ Darrius Hill conducted scholarly work examining the landscape of America during this past presidency and presented a counter-narrative that greatness in America includes the marginalized and recognizes the interconnectedness of human life.⁷² “Although situated in separate fields of study, Black theology and CRT share the same blood, similar viewpoints, and a relatively overlapping

⁶⁹ Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, *Racism Without Racists: Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in America*, 5th ed. (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2018), 251, <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.dtl.idm.oclc.org/lib/dtl/detail.action?docID=4875293>.

⁷⁰ Bonilla-Silva, *Racism Without Racists*, 252.

⁷¹ Stacie Craft DeFreitas and Jonathan Chism, “Introduction: Intersections between African American Religion and Critical Race Studies,” in *Critical Race Studies Across Disciplines: Resisting Racism Through Scholactivism*, eds. Jonathan Chism, Stacie Craft DeFreitas, Vida Robertson, and David Ryden (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books The Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group, Inc., 2021), 303.

⁷² DeFreitas and Chism, “Introduction,” 303.

historical development.”⁷³ “While Black theology and CRT are both technical, academic discourses that are only beginning to interact, the issues most prominent to both discourses play out organically and simultaneously in the real-lived experiences of many scholactivists.”⁷⁴

“Accepting the permanence of racism in American society is a central tenet of CRT.”⁷⁵ Derrick Bell and James Cone agree that racism is intrinsic to American society and Derrick Bell “suggests that racism is as much a permanent feature of American life as death is of human life.”⁷⁶ James Cone asserted in *Martin and Malcolm* the spiritual and moral destruction of white Americans and stated that white supremacy is “part of the spirit of the age, the ethos of the culture, so embedded in the social, economic, and political structure that white society is incapable of knowing its destructive nature.”⁷⁷ In James Cone’s article “Theology’s Great Sin: Silence in the Face of White Supremacy,” Cone asserted that “white supremacy is so widespread and deeply internalized by its victims that many are unaware of their illness and others who are often do not have the cultural and intellectual resources to heal their wounded spirits.”⁷⁸

⁷³ DeFreitas and Chism, “Introduction,” 304.

⁷⁴ DeFreitas and Chism, “Introduction,” 311.

⁷⁵ DeFreitas and Chism, “Introduction,” 306.

⁷⁶ DeFreitas and Chism, “Introduction,” 305-306.

⁷⁷ DeFreitas and Chism, “Introduction,” 306.

⁷⁸ DeFreitas and Chism, “Introduction,” 306.

“CRT can help religious scholactivists working within various religious traditions deepen their understanding of contemporary racism as they strive to oppose it.”⁷⁹ Stacie Craft DeFreitas and Jonathan Chism profoundly assert,

Though important resources, faith, and hope by themselves have proven to be insufficient to overcoming or eradicating racial oppression. As the long struggle for justice persists, CRT can help scholactivists of religion access the true nature of racism in America, possess hope grounded in reality, and sharply contest color-blind, postracial utopianism, a new form of pie in the sky that maintains the oppressive status quo.⁸⁰

Imago Dei is to be made in the image and likeness of God;⁸¹ and, therefore we are all created equal and should have access to opportunities. Racism and racial stigmatization harm the victim, perpetrator of individual racist acts, and society.⁸² “Racism is a breach of the ideal of egalitarianism, that “all men are created equal” and each person is an equal moral agent, an ideal that is a cornerstone of the American moral and legal system.”⁸³

“The significance of race in American culture and social structure was highlighted as a moral contradiction between theory and practice in the hearts, minds, and consciences of White Americans.”⁸⁴ The conflict was “between universal values of the American Creed – the doctrine embodied in the Constitution and Bill of Rights, high

⁷⁹ DeFreitas and Chism, “Introduction,” 312.

⁸⁰ DeFreitas and Chism, “Introduction,” 312.

⁸¹ Donald K. McKim, *The Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms*, 2nd ed. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2014), 158.

⁸² Richard Delgado, “Words That Wound: A Tort Action for Racial Insults, Epithets, and Name-Calling,” in *Critical Race Theory: The Cutting Edge*, ed. Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2013), 181-182, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/dtl/detail.action?docID=1210896>.

⁸³ Delgado, “Words That Wound,” 181-182.

⁸⁴ Frank Harold Wilson, “The Sociology of Racial and Ethnic Relations,” in *21st Century Sociology: A Reference Handbook*, 2 volumes, eds. Clifton D. Bryant and Dennis L. Peck (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2007), 239, <http://dx.doi.org.dtl.idm.oclc.org/10.4135/9781412939645.n23>.

Christian precepts, and the Golden Rule – and the particular discriminatory practices in race relations that resulted from regional doctrines, local customs, conformity pressures, and individual prejudices.”⁸⁵ “Breaches of the egalitarian ideal may demoralize all those who prefer to live in a truly equal society, making them unwilling participants in the perpetuation of racism and racial inequality.”⁸⁶

“A third Reconstruction, somewhat along the lines of the 1960s, may take place, but more slowly, surely, and irreversibly”⁸⁷ that will result in more minorities breaking barriers in the areas of home ownership, job mobility, and entry into universities and colleges.⁸⁸ Civil rights activists and scholars will need to address several concerns around racism as the United States changes complexion such as the “continued deconstruction of race, so that biological theories of inferiority and hierarchy cannot ever again arise,”⁸⁹ erasing barriers to upward mobility like standardized testing (SATs) to enter institutions of higher learning, economic boycotts, increased representation in media, and reforming the policing, criminal justice, sentencing and postconviction systems “so that young minority men have a better chance of going to college than to jail.”⁹⁰

“To the extent that racism contributes to a class system, society has a paramount interest in controlling or suppressing it.”⁹¹ “Racism injures the career prospects, social

⁸⁵ Wilson, “The Sociology of Racial and Ethnic Relations,” 239.

⁸⁶ Delgado, “Words That Wound,” 181-182.

⁸⁷ Delgado and Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory*, 154.

⁸⁸ Delgado and Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory*, 154.

⁸⁹ Delgado and Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory*, 155.

⁹⁰ Delgado and Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory*, 155.

⁹¹ Delgado, “Words That Wound,” 181-182.

mobility, and interracial contacts of minority group members,” which hampers their economic, social, and political contributions to society.⁹² Racism is used “to preserve an economically advantageous position”⁹³ for the white American. “But when individuals cannot or choose not to contribute their talents to a social system because they are demoralized or angry or when they are actively prevented by racist institutions from fully contributing their talents, society as a whole loses.”⁹⁴

Theory and History

The social, political, and legal climate of the 1970s and 1980s provides historical context for the establishment of Critical Race Theory in America.⁹⁵ The Civil Rights Movement, Brown vs. the Board of Education 1954 ruling, The Civil Rights Act of 1964, The Voting Rights Act of 1965, and the Fair Housing Act of 1968 enabled many Americans to view America as colorblind.⁹⁶ “Civil rights gains for communities of color coincide with the dictates of white self- interest.”⁹⁷ Realists questioned if the civil rights remedies provided real and valid gains for people of color.⁹⁸

⁹² Delgado, “Words That Wound,” 181-182.

⁹³ Delgado, “Words That Wound,” 182.

⁹⁴ Delgado, “Words That Wound,” 181-182.

⁹⁵ Chism, “Introduction,” 21.

⁹⁶ Chism, “Introduction,” 21.

⁹⁷ Delgado and Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory*, 22.

⁹⁸ Delgado and Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory*, 22.

Derrick Bell argued that civil rights advances seemed to “coincide with changing economic conditions and the self-interest of elite whites”⁹⁹ by examining the Brown vs. Board of Education case, which was “the crown jewel of U.S. Supreme Court jurisprudence;”¹⁰⁰ and, he questioned why the legal system supported civil rights in 1954 when the NAACP Legal Defense Fund had been litigating “school desegregation cases for years, usually losing or, at best, winning narrow victories.”¹⁰¹ Derrick Bell hypothesized that improving the Black experience in America was not the primary focus but that world and domestic considerations based on the Korean War and the Second World War contributed to the civil rights gains.¹⁰² The Brown vs. the Board of Education case upheld the racial social construction, but it served national interest to vote in favor of civil rights for Blacks in order to uphold foreign interests.¹⁰³ The Brown vs. Board of Education decision successfully substantiated international opinion that the American government was aiming to accomplish due to favorable reactions around the globe.¹⁰⁴ They viewed Brown as “establishing the just equality of the races, essential to universal harmony and peace.”¹⁰⁵

⁹⁹ Delgado and Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory*, 22.

¹⁰⁰ Delgado and Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory*, 22.

¹⁰¹ Delgado and Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory*, 22.

¹⁰² Delgado and Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory*, 23.

¹⁰³ Mary L. Dudziak, “Desegregation as a Cold War Imperative,” in *Critical Race Theory: The Cutting Edge*, eds. Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2013), 137, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/dtl/detail.action?docID=1210896>.

¹⁰⁴ Dudziak, “Desegregation as a Cold War Imperative,” 143.

¹⁰⁵ Dudziak, “Desegregation as a Cold War Imperative,” 143.

“The Civil Rights Movement essentially enabled America to become a colorblind meritocracy in which the social construct of race was inconsequential.”¹⁰⁶ Color blindness will keep minorities in subordinate positions when it comes to the routines, practices, and institutions of society due to the racism embedded in society’s thought processes and social structures.¹⁰⁷ Aggressive color-conscious efforts will effectively change society and the most effective strategy to measure success is a bottom up approach; therefore, if the law being established relieves distress of the poorest most complex group, then it is a just law.¹⁰⁸ Despite many having access to middle class status, “a significant wealth disparity remains between the masses of Blacks and Whites during the 1980s, as it still exists today.”¹⁰⁹ “For centuries, to the present, white leaders and analysts, including numerous physical and social scientists, have seriously ignored or downplayed the long-term human costs of this systemic racism — and the substantial restoration and reparations needed to address those considerable costs.”¹¹⁰

“In the case of race, the most transformational moments in American history have involved social protests and the participation of large numbers of people”¹¹¹ such as the civil war ending slavery and ushering in the Reconstruction Period, the civil rights movement ending one hundred years of the Jim Crow era, and now the post-civil rights era has ushered in “the emergence of a new phase of social movement on race: the Black

¹⁰⁶ Chism, “Introduction,” 23.

¹⁰⁷ Delgado and Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory*, 27.

¹⁰⁸ Delgado and Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory*, 27-28.

¹⁰⁹ Chism, “Introduction,” 23.

¹¹⁰ Feagin, *The White Racial Frame*, 216.

¹¹¹ Bonilla-Silva, *Racism Without Racists*, 246.

Lives Matter mobilization.”¹¹² Historically, sociology has “offered up tools to rationalize and legitimate social inequality.”¹¹³ However, sociology should focus on the “need to understand the different distribution of rights and privileges, of citizenship, and the politics of race, class, and gender in maintaining or diffusing the structures of inequality and domination.”¹¹⁴ Richard Robbins speaks to the situation of Black sociologists:

Given the depth and pervasiveness of racism in the United States, if a man or woman is a historian and [B]lack, a sociologist and [B]lack, then he or she is compelled to work out a distinctive role balance between scholarship and advocacy, between creativity and commitment. Therefore, the [B]lack social scientist owes it to himself and the [B]lack community to fashion his own sense of balance inside the work itself — objective, scholarly analysis of the racial situation, its history and its structure, and passionate advocacy of freedom, justice, and group identity.¹¹⁵

The Atlanta School and Hull House along with historically Black colleges and universities were ignored for their contributions in the development of sociology.¹¹⁶ The Atlanta School and Hull House established the strong foundation of a social justice sociology research as well as scholar activism.¹¹⁷ Furthermore, W.E.B. DuBois’ theoretical and empirical work was also disregarded for “lacking objectivity and offering a biased interpretation of data.”¹¹⁸ White sociologists did not want to support DuBois in his sociological research on Black communities and withheld access to their resources

¹¹² Bonilla-Silva, *Racism Without Racists*, 246.

¹¹³ Romero, “Sociology Engaged in Social Justice,” 23.

¹¹⁴ Romero, “Sociology Engaged in Social Justice,” 23.

¹¹⁵ Romero, “Sociology Engaged in Social Justice,” 14.

¹¹⁶ Romero, “Sociology Engaged in Social Justice,” 4.

¹¹⁷ Romero, “Sociology Engaged in Social Justice,” 4.

¹¹⁸ Romero, “Sociology Engaged in Social Justice,” 4.

and research centers.¹¹⁹ Despite his disappointment of these “scientific leaders of a great nation” and as an activist scholar, DuBois believed that sociology could be a “liberating force”¹²⁰ and sociology can be “scientifically rigorous”¹²¹ while “advocating for social justice.”¹²² Research on race and ethnicity in the field of sociology are addressing power, domination, subordination, subjugation, and white supremacy using the frameworks of intersectionality, Critical Race Theory and other frameworks, which are building on the historical works of DuBois.¹²³ In addition to many other Black sociologists, DuBois and Ida B Wells-Barnett were not invited to the founding of the American Sociological Society for their activist sociology that would try to design a better society for all humankind.¹²⁴

Public sociology is a call to transcend sociology beyond the academy into everyday life and living.¹²⁵ The Sociology Liberation Movement is focused on the “need to use sociological knowledge to benefit the poor and powerless.”¹²⁶ The American Sociological Association and the discipline overall must “reclaim its position as a science of society and its social justice traditions.”¹²⁷ One way to reclaim this social justice

¹¹⁹ Romero, “Sociology Engaged in Social Justice,” 5.

¹²⁰ Romero, “Sociology Engaged in Social Justice,” 11.

¹²¹ Romero, “Sociology Engaged in Social Justice,” 11.

¹²² Romero, “Sociology Engaged in Social Justice,” 11.

¹²³ Romero, “Sociology Engaged in Social Justice,” 15.

¹²⁴ Romero, “Sociology Engaged in Social Justice,” 16.

¹²⁵ Romero, “Sociology Engaged in Social Justice,” 18.

¹²⁶ Romero, “Sociology Engaged in Social Justice,” 18.

¹²⁷ Romero, “Sociology Engaged in Social Justice,” 22.

tradition in sociology is to acknowledge the Black sociologists' empirical, theoretical and methodological contributions as well as acknowledge the scientific rigor around social justice.¹²⁸ It is an imperative for American sociology to embrace the activist-scholar, public sociology, and the public intellectual; and, the discipline can begin by rewriting Black activist-scholar sociologists back into American sociology as a start.¹²⁹ The field of sociology should rewrite W. E. B. Du Bois as a founding father of sociology and certainly include Black women sociologists Anna Julia Cooper and Ida B. Wells-Barnett as well as Black feminist sociologists.¹³⁰

Critical Race theorists look at how American systems reflect the “race-neutral, merit-based perspective” of the law.¹³¹ Derrick Bell, Black civil rights activist, and Alan Freeman, white liberal, founded the legal background of CRT and established that integration met the interests of whites with no regard to the impacts integration would have on Black communities; and, this critical examination demonstrated ways that “legal doctrine substantiates racial power and injustice.”¹³² The term CRT was coined to clarify that this work “locates itself in intersection of critical theory and race, racism, and the law.”¹³³ Early pioneers of CRT critically evaluated colorblindness, formal legal equality,

¹²⁸ Romero, “Sociology Engaged in Social Justice,” 22-23.

¹²⁹ Romero, “Sociology Engaged in Social Justice,” 23.

¹³⁰ Romero, “Sociology Engaged in Social Justice,” 23.

¹³¹ Chism, “Introduction,” 25.

¹³² Chism, “Introduction,” 25.

¹³³ Chism, “Introduction,” 26.

and integrationism.¹³⁴ Kimberle Crenshaw, Neil Gotanda and Stephanie Philips synthesized this theory to examine racial politics in 1989 at the University of Wisconsin-Madison Law.¹³⁵ Kimberle Crenshaw adds multidimensional complexity when racism, sexism, and economic injustice meet because intersectional analysis and evaluations of various systems of oppression are “necessary to pursue radical societal transformation.”¹³⁶

In the United States, history is not considered one of the social sciences; however, there is a relationship between history and sociology that has changed due to the “the new status that the past has acquired in social life.”¹³⁷ Now sociology must consider history because different groups use both to “ensure change in the national narrative that until now ignored or minimized the history of their suffering.”¹³⁸ “Among the earliest generations of sociologists, the interests in racial and ethnic relations were initially influenced by cultural discourses focused on explaining the “race problem” or “Negro problem.”¹³⁹

From the end of the Civil War to the turn of the century, the race problem in the United States centered on explaining the lower status and morality of Blacks in the South who had come out of slavery and Reconstruction and remained largely subordinated and impoverished.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁴ Chism, “Introduction,” 26.

¹³⁵ Chism, “Introduction,” 26.

¹³⁶ Chism, “Introduction,” 27.

¹³⁷ Michel Wieviorka, “Recent Changes in Sociology,” in *The Shape of Sociology for the 21st Century: Tradition and Renewal*, ed. Devorah Kalekin-Fishman and Ann Denis (London, UK: SAGE Publications Ltd., 2012), 21, <http://dx.doi.org.dtl.idm.oclc.org/10.4135/9781446288641.n2>.

¹³⁸ Wieviorka, “Recent Changes in Sociology,” 21.

¹³⁹ Wilson, “The Sociology of Racial and Ethnic Relations,” 1-238.

¹⁴⁰ Wilson, “The Sociology of Racial and Ethnic Relations,” 1-238.

Early sociologists drew from social Darwinism and biogenetic assumptions of human society to argue that there are differences in the human population and the natural inequality of humankind was based on race.¹⁴¹ “Sociologist Oliver Cox exposed the whiteness of sociology by the mid-twentieth century,”¹⁴² and Joyce Ladner offered the same exposure “against the disciplinary practices of sociology in the 1970s with her provocatively titled collection, *The Death of White Sociology*.”¹⁴³ “More recently, the sociologists Tukufu Zuberi and Eduardo Bonilla-Silva have challenged empirical methodologies”¹⁴⁴ in the sociology discipline.

Despite the historical exclusion of social justice in American sociology, Mary Romero concludes:

Reclaiming the tradition of social justice in American sociology requires acknowledging the discipline’s colonial roots and its service as an instrument of the state and recognizing that the tent is large enough for many sociologies, including those engaged in decolonizing the discipline. Decolonizing involves excavating the standpoints previously suppressed or rendered invisible while creating an environment for other standpoints, world views, interests, and concerns to engage in knowledge production that promotes social justice.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴¹ Wilson, “The Sociology of Racial and Ethnic Relations,” 1-238.

¹⁴² Kimberle Williams Crenshaw, “Twenty Years of Critical Race Theory: Looking back to Move Forward Commentary: Critical Race Theory: A Commemoration: Lead Article,” (2011), *Connecticut Law Review*, 117, 1257, https://opencommons.uconn.edu/law_review/117.

¹⁴³ Crenshaw, “Twenty Years of Critical Race Theory,” 1257.

¹⁴⁴ Crenshaw, “Twenty Years of Critical Race Theory,” 1257.

¹⁴⁵ Romero, “Sociology Engaged in Social Justice,” 23-24.

Conclusion

Sociologists “study social life, and if social life evolves, then sociological analysis is also transformed.”¹⁴⁶ Eduardo Bonilla-Silva asserts that his “sociology would be meaningless if it did not move people to action.”¹⁴⁷ Mary Romero asserts that sociology “must be engaged in social justice” and sociologists “need to be social activists.”¹⁴⁸

Margaret Abraham, sociologist and social justice advocate, wrote,

As sociologists we have an ethical and professional responsibility to use our sociological imagination, the array of professional tools at our disposal, and to partner in addressing the many obstacles that challenge our world. There still exists a gap between the sociological imagination and an actual transformation of society.¹⁴⁹

The Reverend Doctor NeShawn Dawson asserts, “CRT disrupts the status quo. CRT has several tenets. One tenet is storytelling and storytelling gives voice to those who have historically been silenced.”¹⁵⁰ Sociologists must “see the world from the margins and from multiple perspectives”¹⁵¹ while challenging universal narratives, and traditional thinking in order for “other possibilities to emerge.”¹⁵² Historically, distortions, intentional exclusions, and biased thinking produced knowledge from a one-dimensional

¹⁴⁶ Wieviorka, “Recent Changes in Sociology,” 13.

¹⁴⁷ Bonilla-Silva, *Racism Without Racists*, 240.

¹⁴⁸ Romero, “Sociology Engaged in Social Justice,” 25.

¹⁴⁹ Romero, “Sociology Engaged in Social Justice,” 25.

¹⁵⁰ NeShawn Dawson, In a conversation with Catina Blackmon Jackson, November 20, 2021.

¹⁵¹ Romero, “Sociology Engaged in Social Justice,” 24.

¹⁵² Romero, “Sociology Engaged in Social Justice,” 24.

perspective, but American sociology needs to “begin viewing the world from the peripheries and seeing it grow from multiple perspectives.”¹⁵³

One of the themes Critical Race Theory holds is that race is a “social construction” and a product of “social thought and relations” because there is no “biological or genetic reality; rather, races are categories that society invents, manipulates, or retires when convenient.”¹⁵⁴ Race must be understood as a social phenomenon with “social meanings that connect our faces to our souls” that is subject “to the macro forces of social and political struggle.”¹⁵⁵ “Race must be viewed as a social construction. That is, human interaction rather than natural differentiation must be seen as the source and continued basis for racial categorization.”¹⁵⁶ As a result of race being a social construction, “ideas about race form part of a wider social fabric into which other relations, not least gender and class, are also woven.”¹⁵⁷ Race governs every aspect of American life in society.¹⁵⁸ Race determines economic prospects such as “manual jobs, professional careers, financing for real estate, and access to insurance.”¹⁵⁹

¹⁵³ Romero, “Sociology Engaged in Social Justice,” 24.

¹⁵⁴ Delgado and Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory*, 9.

¹⁵⁵ Ian F. Haney López, “The Social Construction of Race,” in *Critical Race Theory: The Cutting Edge*, eds. Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2013), 240, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/dtl/detail.action?docID=1210896>.

¹⁵⁶ López, “The Social Construction of Race,” 243.

¹⁵⁷ López, “The Social Construction of Race,” 244.

¹⁵⁸ López, “The Social Construction of Race,” 239.

¹⁵⁹ López, “The Social Construction of Race,” 239.

A proposed solution for society is to develop “an unprecedented collaborative relationship” with educational resources to “enhance racial understanding” and to “facilitate community engagement.”¹⁶⁰ Preliminary data supports,

that this kind of collaborative educational model can engender related initiatives, wherein students engage their own schools, parents and community groups, and civic entities, among others, in efforts to challenge racial stereotypes and promote programs that will begin to help equalize the massive racial and economic disparities that continue to produce great harm to the nation as a whole.¹⁶¹

The Franklin community will benefit from this interdisciplinary examination. The tradition of social justice in the work of sociology must be embraced to affect positive change in communities of color. The ability to see through the Critical Race Theory lens into the societal structures and norms, which historically have been steeped in white supremacy, will empower the project to implement solutions that lean toward culturally sensitive, racially just, and socially humane programming that will meet the youth’s needs directly. Due diligence of community leaders is required to understand the sociological impacts and how best to provide solutions that counter the status quo. The opportunity to provide positive counter narratives and offer authentic storytelling will benefit this project specifically as well as generations to come in Franklin Township. An interdisciplinary approach encourages activists, clergy, community leaders, and professionals from various disciplines that bring their expertise to the project to promote societal transformation, which will result in healthy, equitable, and just social change.

¹⁶⁰ Curtis L. Ivery and Joshua A Bassett, eds., *America's Urban Crisis and the Advent of Color-Blind Politics: Education, Incarceration, Segregation, and the Future of the U.S. Multiracial Democracy* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2011), 133, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/dtl/detail.action?docID=1209085>.

¹⁶¹ Ivery and Bassett, *America's Urban Crisis*, 133.

CHAPTER SIX

PROJECT ANALYSIS

This project was birthed out of a need to change the trajectory of Black youth in Franklin Township (Somerset County, Somerset, New Jersey), who lack guidance and direction as they transition from high school into adulthood. The burden to provide that guidance and direction rests on those community leaders who are willing and able to solve the problem, which is to minimize unrest and criminal activity while increasing socially responsible and productive activity. As a prophetic activist, this is a welcome burden that is embraced with a divine strategy, thorough research, and meticulous care to lead the next generation of civically responsible citizens.

Unfortunately, Franklin's youth can become distracted as they figure out how to navigate life after high school graduation. The solution is to create synergy within the community and collaborate with Franklin's community leaders and people of influence to offer this direction and guidance. The implementation of this project is an effective intervention to bridge the gap from childhood to adulthood for Franklin Township's youth. This project is designed to support their willingness to transition effectively in this community and to navigate adulthood as socially and civically responsible citizens. This is the work of the prophetic activist in the community.

There were four focal points explored in the foundational papers for this project: Biblical, Historical, Theological, and Interdisciplinary. The Biblical Foundations focused

on community wisdom in Proverbs 22:1-16. The Historical Foundations examined the successful emergence of the Black community during the Reconstruction Era. The Theological Foundations reflected on Black liberation theology, womanism, and the hermeneutics of social movements, namely the Black Lives Matter Movement. The Interdisciplinary Foundations critiqued the development of communities through the lens of Critical Race Theory while examining the field of sociology. All four focal points elucidated critical aspects of this project that will determine its success. The integration of all four developed one cohesive thought around the importance of prophetic activism in the community — to promote social transformation and social change.

Prophetic Activism: From the Cross to the Community is more than the name of this doctoral program's cohort. This project embodies what it means to bring the good news of Jesus Christ to the community. This project relates to the Doctor of Ministry program based on the community being the focal point and how best to empower this community. This project embodies prophetic activism by making profound connections that will affect social change and transformation. As a prophetic activist, I desire to transform the community, and the structured approach of this doctoral program has propelled this ministry work to a higher calling in Jesus Christ. This project embraces the research from the biblical, historical, theological, and interdisciplinary foundations with my professional lived experiences to impact positive change in the lives of Franklin Township's youth.

This project has served to provide the Franklin Township community with the resources needed to support the youth of Franklin in Somerset, New Jersey, as they transition into adulthood. This project analysis will examine the key components of this

project implementation with a concerted effort to explain the methodology, implementation, and summary of learning. The section on methodology will analyze the approach used and the methods of gathering data. The implementation section will provide an overview of the project proposal, data collection, data analysis, and the implementation process. The summary of learning will review the project successes and project improvements from the participants' lens and the lens of the principal investigator. Finally, the conclusion will reflect on lessons learned in this doctoral journey, the ministry impact, the community impact, and those important next steps that will sustain this project for continued transformation in the youth of Franklin Township.

Methodology

Hypothesis

The hypothesis for the project is that if Franklin Township's Black youth receive Christian spiritual mentorship, then Franklin's Black youth will be prepared to transition into adulthood while circumventing societal distractions and pressures.

Intervention

The problem in Franklin Township (Somerset County), New Jersey, is that there are no mentoring opportunities to assist Black youth's transition from childhood to adulthood upon graduating from high school who are not college or military bound. There are many youth programs and youth outlets offered to Franklin's youth during their school age years, but the support ends upon graduation from high school. This spiritual

mentorship program prepares Franklin's youth for a successful transition into adulthood and offers tool and resources to transition effectively.

Research Design and Approach Used

This project was designed using a proactive action research method. This project was based on a six-week Christian spiritual mentorship program. The most effective research design employed was using a workshop model. The workshop model facilitated active engagement, full participation, and the ability to collect various forms of data over the six-week period.

The approach of this project is to facilitate community-based collaboration and create synergy with Franklin's adults, community resources, and the municipality's institutions to provide guidance and direction for mentoring Franklin's youth. The community-based collaboration involved gathering feedback from multiple leaders in Franklin. The leadership involved was within the board of education, the school district, the municipality's youth center, local youth programs, and parents. Some of the organizations involved in the implementation of this project approach included working with the leadership at the Grace Resource Center, Middle Earth Community Youth Center, JOURNEYS Program, VISIONS PLUS Program, the PROMISE PLUS Program, the Franklin Youth Center, Operation Great Expectation, the high school, and the alternative high school.

As the principal investigator, I served as the primary workshop facilitator hosting each session during the six-week mentorship program with a small group of young adults between the ages of eighteen to twenty-three years old. This age group was solicited

because this is the age group that typically graduates from high school. Also, research during the contextual analysis revealed that this is the age group experiencing distractions and they need positive ways to successfully transition from high school to adulthood if they did not choose college or the military as their next phase in life. The offering of six sessions highlighting key life skills to function as a socially responsible citizen were critical to positively affect change in Franklin's youth. These sessions were designed to elicit a cognitive and affective change in those who participated.

The design of each session was focused on empowerment. Each session began with an opening meditation, a centering activity, interactive dialogue about the importance of that lesson on empowerment, and a closing meditation. This approach was critical to highlight the life skills and the willingness to think about the life choices and life decisions that the participants must consider that can impact the rest of their lives and this community. The activities, deliverables, and workshop outcomes were designed to draw out the ingenuity, creativity, and independent thinking of each participant.

Measurement and Instrumentation

This project was measured based on a few data collection methods. Pre- and post-project questionnaires (See Appendix A) were employed. Personal interviews, feedback questionnaires, and focus group discussions with predetermined questions were the types of research instruments (See Appendix A) selected. These research instruments were approved by United Theological Seminary's Institutional Review Board (IRB). The research instruments are included in the Appendix section for review. Each research instrument used did not identify participants by name. The questionnaires guaranteed

confidentiality and anonymity because the heading on each questionnaire and the interview questions reflected the same — the participant's number only. Also, during the project design and implementation, feedback, observations, and reflections were measurements employed to evaluate the impacts and insights received throughout the six-week program.

There were eight questions included on the pre- and post-project questionnaires. Each question had an expected result. The expected results included the participants leaving with thoughts and feelings of a positive self-image and healthy sense of self-empowerment and spiritual empowerment. The other expected results are to complete a life plan, which highlights being a productive citizen in the Franklin community, identify their personal goals, identify their professional goals, create a realistic budget, and to highlight their civic responsibilities and feel empowered to use their voice in the community.

The personal interviews were set up as one-on-one interviews with predetermined questions. The personal interviews (See Appendix A) were scheduled for each participant at a separate time outside of the weekly empowerment sessions. Each predetermined question had an expected result. Those expected results included the ability to understand: their transition process and determine if this six-week program met their needs, their financial situation, their ability to create a realistic budget for their needs, and their personal and professional development goals. Also, the personal interviews were designed to gain any insight about any gaps identified, needs to consider, and changes to implement in future programming. Finally, the one-on-one interviews were designed to assess their civic and social responsibilities to the community.

Feedback questionnaires were passed out at the end of each session during the six-week program. The same feedback questionnaire was used for each session to keep consistent data metrics and to easily compare from one week to the next week any transformation and positive change. The expected results from the weekly feedback questionnaire are as follows: to confirm lessons learned, to affirm learning took place during the session, to understand their voice, to be empowered to act productively, to confirm insights gained, to internalize the lesson and materials learned, to identify any gaps in the learning and what should be added moving forward for that lesson, to address any open or outstanding issues, to determine the success of the session, and to assess their spiritual life.

The focus group discussion was the central focal point of the last session during this six-week project. Ten questions were asked about the participants and their ability to successfully transition into adulthood. The expected results from these ten questions were as follows: to assess participant's transition from childhood to adulthood, to assess how they are making the transition, to assess their concerns with their transition, to assess if they have personal and professional goals, to assess their sense of self-empowerment, to assess their need for additional community resources, and to assess their ability to create a realistic budget. Another expected result was to gain insight about their self-empowerment, spiritual empowerment, economic empowerment, and civic responsibilities to be productive. Lastly, the final expected result from the focus group discussion was to gain insight about any gaps identified, needs to consider, and changes to implement in this project's future programming.

Paper was used for these research instruments. All research instruments used will be shredded after the publication of this project analysis. The outcomes and expected results are detailed in the implementation section of this project analysis. The analysis of the data and how the project unfolded are also highlighted as part of the project implementation.

Stakeholders

There were several stakeholders involved in the formation and implementation of this project. I am the principal investigator and primary contact responsible for the creation, development, and implementation of this doctoral project. The co-principal investigators are the seminary's faculty mentor and the faculty consultant at United Theological Seminary — both served as advisors to this study. Reverend Doctor D. Anthony Everett served as the faculty mentor and co-principal investigator. Reverend Doctor Xavier Johnson served as the faculty consultant and co-principal investigator. The stakeholder in the community who served as the catalyst for this project and the primary consultant in the creation, development and implementation of this project is Coach Audrey Taylor, who is the Founder and CEO of Passion 4 Youth, Inc. (P4Y).

The additional stakeholders include the participants themselves, several community leaders, the context associates, and the professional associates. The implementation section outlines the roles and responsibilities of these additional stakeholders and how they played a pivotal role in the successful implementation of this project. The implementation section also addresses how the project unfolded. This

section documents the implementation process, the six-week lesson plans, the data analysis, and the deviations required to ensure the success of this project.

Implementation

This six-week project served the youth of the Franklin Township community during the months of May and June 2022. The Project Start Date was May 1, 2022, and the project concluded on June 30, 2022. Due to unexpected recruitment challenges, the actual project start date was delayed by two weeks. However, an additional buffer of time was included as part of the contingency plan during the project planning phase. This contingency plan was activated and therefore enabled the project to still finish on time.

A significant amount of preliminary project planning was necessary to ensure the success of the implementation of this project. During the months of December 2021 through February 2022, planning meetings, project sponsor meetings, community leader meetings, meetings with the project's co-principal investigator and faculty mentor, and meetings with context and professional associates were required to launch this project correctly. The project plan included tasks to design the six-week program in February 2022, secure approvals to proceed with project implementation in March 2022, and recruit, register, and confirm participants in April 2022. Upon approval from United Theological Seminary's Institutional Review Board in March 2022, active recruitment began soon after their approvals in March and April 2022. The six-week program launch began in May 2022 and concluded in June 2022.

Overview of Project Proposal

The project theme addressed the effectiveness of the prophetic activism approach to community development and youth outreach. Culturally sensitive organizations and faith-based organizations should support Black young adults with their transition into adulthood after high school graduation for those who did not choose college or military as their next phase of life. The project model is the prophetic activism framework that emphasizes that Black lives matter, and every Black voice is empowered with a sense of independence and agency to live a life of freedom with social accountability and civic responsibilities. Overall, the project's expected results are two-fold: (1) to increase their understanding of their social and civic responsibilities, and (2) to see a visible transformation in Franklin's youth that produces an emboldened spirit of empowerment and self-confidence to face the challenges of living in the world as an adult.

Implementation Process

The project planning phase centered around the need to meet multiple milestone dates to complete this project on time. One-on-one personal interviews were scheduled at the participant's convenience during the six-week period. These personal interviews provided a means to ask additional questions regarding the program and receive feedback about the program's effectiveness. The interviews were scheduled and completed before the project end date of June 30, 2022.

Project Participants

The requirements for project participants were identified based on three criteria. The first criterion is the project participants must be a recent high school graduate from Franklin High School or a resident of Franklin Township, Somerset, New Jersey. The second criterion is the project participants must be between the ages of eighteen and twenty-three. The third criterion is that project participants must not be enrolled in college or in the United States military. The total number of project participants planned for enrollment were seven to ten participants. If more than ten participants requested to participate in the program, then the selection process was based on first come first served. The first ten to enroll who satisfactorily meet all the criteria would be selected. No vulnerable populations were included in this project. In other words, pregnant women, minors, prisoners, and the cognitively impaired were excluded and not recruited to participate in this project.

Project participants received an overview of the project and asked to sign a letter of consent (See Appendix A). The letter of consent included critical components centered around participant protection that included potential risks, potential discomforts, and the potential for legal, financial, social, or personal impacts if accidental data disclosed was reviewed. Additional components to protect participants included breach of confidentiality, safeguarding the identity of the participants, and precautions taken to safeguard records and individuals. The participants were informed that their participation is voluntary. In other words, project participants can stop the project with no impact and no consequence at any time during the duration of the project. The informed consent letter was reviewed in detail and participants were asked to sign, if they chose to continue

with this project. The informed consent letter is included in the Appendix section for review. Finally, no financial incentives were given to participants, and there were no financial interests or conflicts of interests involved in the implementation of this project. The United Theological Seminary's Institutional Review Board approved the project implementation and participant participation in March 2022.

The recruitment process involved a publicity campaign sponsored by the project sponsors. The recruitment posters and recruitment flyers (See Appendix C) included the project sponsors: First New Birth Baptist Church Life Enrichment Center and Passion 4 Youth, Inc. (P4Y). There were four distinctive designs for the recruitment flyers. Joy Peters designed three flyers that included representation of young Black men and women. Tiana Joy Jackson designed the last flyer with a different marketing design to spark additional interest when the recruitment efforts started to slow down. All recruitment flyers included a QRC code — thus recruits could scan and register for the program. The recruitment flyers were posted, emailed, and shared with the many local community organizations. The recruitment flyers are included in the Appendix section for review.

The recruitment process required a significant amount of communication, collaboration, and networking with community leaders and resources to find project participants. Several meetings and conversations were held with community leaders to support the active recruitment of young adults for this program. Leadership at Grace Resource Center, Middle Earth Community Youth Centers' JOURNEYS Program, VISIONS PLUS Program, and PROMISE PLUS Program offered helpful suggestions and ideas. The leadership at the Franklin Youth Center was supportive to advertise and support the program. However, their population ages out of the youth center at eighteen

years of age. Consequently, any recruitment activities were targeted to a smaller, limited audience. The youth center's director did offer the use of the facility for the future of this program.

Professional and Context Associates

The professional associates provided guidance and support during the project planning phases. They directed me to be sure to consider the impact of the sessions on the participants. Reverend Doctor Joseph Hooper, Doctor Sabin Duncan, and Reverend Doctor NeShawn Dawson challenged me to weigh all options and then consider the impacts when a shift takes place and how best to plan for changes during the implementation process. In other words, each of them conveyed clearly to expect the unexpected and then shift as necessary. Lastly, this team of professional associates provided consultation, recommendations, and guidance during the final analysis phase of this project and this doctoral program overall.

The context associates were engaged throughout the implementation of this project. Nancy LaCorte was engaged from project planning to project implementation and the analysis phase. As President of the Board of Education, Nancy LaCorte has a heart for Franklin's youth and offers her time and resources to provide proper networking and collaboration for the success of this project. As Somerset County Commissioner, Shanel Y. Robinson knows the community organizations that support youth in Somerset County. Shanel Y. Robinson provided those community resources; hence, the network with those organizations has been a tremendous benefit to the implementation of this project. Doctor Nicholas Solomon provided words of advice and solid recommendations

during the project proposal and project planning phases as well as recruitment. As the Franklin High School Principal, Doctor Nicholas Solomon worked diligently to actively recruit participants that met the project criteria during the recruitment phase. Coach Audrey Taylor, as a co-sponsor of this project, secured the venue, launched a social media buzz, and offered her presence during the six-week program. Coach Audrey Taylor hosted the last session and provided insights during the focus group discussion. She offered her feedback, thoughts, and ideas to continue this project after this doctoral program.

There were others on the team who offered sage advice and contributions to this project who were not classified as professional and context associates on this team.

Reverend Damon Horton, who served on the Doctoral Examination Review Committee as a peer associate, offered recommendations about the program design, content for the sessions, and how to effectively connect with the participants given the age group.

Kimberly Banks is an influential community leader in Franklin due to a significant tragedy in her family. The murder and death of her oldest son, Samaad Z. Frazier, is the catalyst for this project. As Samaad's mother and highly respected community leader, Kimberly Banks blessed the project and attended the final session to offer her words of encouragement, feedback, and affirmation to continue to impact one life at a time in the Franklin Township community. Nikkii Tatum, the Vice Principal of the alternative high school called Road to Success (RTS), was an avid supporter of this project. She affirmed at every meeting, each recruitment encounter, and during the first couple of sessions how much she believes in the project and the potential of this project. She confirmed that this project must reach as many graduating seniors as possible in Franklin. Nikkii Tatum

plans to continue this partnership. Efforts are being made to formulate a strategy and implementation plan for the next graduating class to learn and grow during their transition into adulthood. Lastly, the school district's Superintendent, the Franklin High School Athletic Director, the Director of Operation Great Expectation, and the Director of the Franklin Youth Center did a fabulous job of supporting the recruitment efforts for this project and offering words of encouragement and support to ensure project implementation success. All professional associates, context associates, and community leaders will play a pivotal role in the next steps and future implementation of this project.

Six Week Lesson Plans: Content of Presentations

The six-week lesson plan followed a similar structure with an overview, timed activities, deliverable, and outcome. The six lessons revolved around the theme of empowerment and the varied types of empowerments for a young adult. The lesson plans (See Appendix D) are included for review. As principal investigator, I designed and facilitated the six-week lesson plans. Session One was entitled Self-Empowerment: To Thine Own Self Be True. Session Two was entitled Personal Empowerment: Plan Your Work & Work Your Plan. Session Three was entitled Professional Empowerment: Plan Your Work & Work Your Plan. Session Four was entitled Economic Empowerment: Money Matters. Session Five was entitled Spiritual Empowerment: You Matter Because Black Lives Matter. Session Six was entitled Focus Group Wrap-Up. During these sessions, participants identified their personal and professional goals. Additionally, participants created a life plan and a financial plan creating a realistic budget as well as developed ideas around a personal wellness team.

Each weekly session began with music and a meal. Dinner ideas were requested. The participants responded in kind by offering their favorite meals as dinner options. All feedback for dinner options were honored. The first four sessions were held at Franklin High School. The fifth session, *Spiritual Empowerment: You Matter Because Black Lives Matter*, was held outside at the local park. The meal was picnic style. The final session was held at the local restaurant to wrap up and complete the focus group discussion and questions. All sessions were led and facilitated by me, the principal investigator.

Collection and Analysis of Data

The collection of data consists of the participant profiles, the pre-project questionnaire, the post-project questionnaire, the weekly session feedback questionnaires, the personal one-on-one interviews, and the focus group discussion. The analysis of the data followed the collection of data presented. The analysis of the data also included observations made during the six-week program and reflections of the planning process prior to the start of the six-week sessions.

The participant profiles include the following demographics. There were five participants who signed the letter of consent to participate in this project. The age group of the participants were between the ages of eighteen and twenty. Three participants identified as male, and two participants identified as female. The education level of the participants ranged from high school to college. Two participants were seniors in high school. Two participants had one semester of college. The education level beyond high school of one of the participants is unknown. All project participants lived in Franklin

Township, Somerset, New Jersey. All, except one, participants were students from the Franklin school district: two from the high school and two from the alternative high school. One participant moved to the Franklin community within months of the launch of this program. Four participants were Black, and one participant was Hispanic.

There were three participants who registered and all three did attend the first session. During session one, the letter of consent was read in its entirety and discussed to ensure there were no questions. No one raised any questions, and all three participants did sign the letter of consent.

A week after the program started on June 1, I attended RTS to recruit additional participants. There were ten students who attended. I brought a meal to garner additional support hoping this would be an incentive for the students to want to participate. The vice principal vocalized this incentive, and one student was highly offended and vocal about considering a meal as an incentive. Two students were still minors and could not qualify for this focus group, but they stayed to hear the presentation anyway. I read the letter of consent and offered up an overview of the six-week project. Two of the eight students expressed interest. One student walked out but came back and said that they changed their mind because they know that they need additional support after talking to their grandparent about what their plans will be after graduating high school. The student completed the pre-project questionnaire and signed the letter of consent, but never attended one session. The student did offer feedback requesting if one-on-one sessions would be provided. The other student did the same. The student completed the pre-project questionnaire and signed the letter of consent but never attended one session. The vice principal did admonish both to attend and that they must honor their commitments.

The data collected from each instrument reflects as follows. The pre-project questionnaire data from those who registered and signed the letter of the consent responded as such in Table 1. There are five participants in total, and two of the five participants are seniors from the alternative high school, Road to Success (RTS). Each participant who attended the first session was asked to select their favorite number so their folder with the pre- and post-questionnaires, personal one-on-one interview, and their weekly session feedback questionnaires would be assigned their favorite number to ensure confidentiality and anonymity. Therefore, the number assignments for the three participants reflected as Participant 1, Participant 3, and Participant 21. The two participants from RTS only attended the recruiting session, signed the letter of consent, and completed the pre-questionnaire. They did not attend the first session; hence, they did not have the opportunity to share their favorite number and thus assigned as RTS 1 and RTS 2 to maintain confidentiality and anonymity.

Below are the participants' responses in Table 1. Responses were genericized to remove any personally identifiable information such as gender and organization affiliations. For the complete question in its entirety, refer to the Appendix section for the pre-project questionnaire.

Table 1. Pre-Project Questionnaire Responses for Project Participants

Pre and Post Questions	Participant 1	Participant 3	Participant 21	RTS 1	RTS 2
1.How would you describe yourself?	No response	I'm a teenager looking forward to be successful in life and working hard every day to achieve it.	No response	I am a young person who was confused & lost.	I'm a caring and respectful young person who tries to bring the best out of people
2. What are the major issues, concerns, and goals? How is your self-esteem, impacted?	No response	I don't know	No response	My life is not even close to where I wanna be. I need to get further than where I am. Keeping a job & being financially stable. I am not very happy w/ my life & where I am but I would like to be.	I'm not 100% satisfied on where I am in life but I'm not complaining I let a lot of distractions take me away from my main focus, such as graduating and getting my license
3.What are your life goals?	No response	Be a hard working person with no debts and living peacefully.	My goals are to run a food business and learn how to manage a food business and grow from there.	*Being financially stable, *Being on my own, *Being happy.	5 – Buy a House 10 – Own Property (Land) 15 - Making very good profit from leasing property
4. Do you know the concept “Life Plan”?	No response	I don't know	No response	Yes & I honestly don't know what it is	No, I'm not familiar w/ that concept
5.Do you use a budget to govern your personal finances?	No response	I don't know	No response	None, I am the worse with money.	No training at the moment

6. How do you budget for savings, emergencies, and retirement?	No response	Well, I have a savings for a car.	No response	I really don't do well with saving. I never had to. I am quick to spend, spend.	No, I haven't
7. Are you registered to vote?	No response	No. I don't know	No response	No, I just turned 18 so I'll make sure I register soon.	No, not yet; but I will be soon
8. In what ways do you currently volunteer?	No response	I don't...don't got time, always working	No response	I don't b/c I honestly don't know why. I would love to I just never knew where to start.	I participate in the council

Participant 1 did not complete the pre-project questionnaire. None of the questions were responded to or marked. Participant 1 attended the first session and did not return to the program. Two participants from the alternative high school did complete the pre-project questionnaire. Both participants from RTS did not attend any session. The last notable observation is the lack of response for many questions asked.

There was one participant who followed through to the end of the program. The participant's pre- and post-questionnaire responses are provided in Table 2 for comparison.

Table 2. Pre-Project and Post-Project Questionnaire Responses for Comparison

Pre and Post Questions	Participant 21 Pre-Response	Participant 21 Post-Response
1.How would you describe yourself?	No response	I would say I am a nice person and I love to enjoy time and peace, and that I'm an outgoing person.
2. What are the major issues, concerns, and goals? How is your self-esteem, impacted?	No response	No response
3.What are your life goals?	My goals are to run a food business, learn how to manage your food business, and go from there.	My goal now is to start learning to run my food business so 5 years from now I would be successful in selling food or running a restaurant
4. Do you know the concept "Life Plan"?	No response	Yes, my life plan now is to learn and grow of what you are interested in and have a good mindset
5.Do you use a budget to govern your personal finances?	No response	No response
6. How do you budget for savings, emergencies, and retirement?	No response	No response
7. Are you registered to vote?	No response	Yes, but I haven't voted yet
8. In what ways do you currently volunteer?	No response	No response

Participant 21, for the pre-project questionnaire, only answered one question and that was question number three in the response: "my goals are to run a food business, learn how to manage your food business and go from there." The other seven questions had no response. For the post-project questionnaire, Participant 21 provided more responses demonstrating growth, change, and transformation during the six-week program. This project had a positive impact on the one who remained committed to doing

the transformational work. The potential to reach more young adults exists and the summary of learnings will identify additional ways to affect positive change.

The data results for each empowerment session are noted in the following tables. Each session highlights the impact of the session on each project participant. The results of the feedback reveal that cognitive and affective learning took place. As the session facilitator, there were moments of change and conversation that reflected transformation in their lives. The opportunity to experience a different thought, a new perspective, and open dialogue garnered the change and transformation required to effectively transition into adulthood. The next six tables show the slow progression of change in the project participants who remained committed to the project.

The questionnaire data from Session 1, Self-Empowerment: To Thine Own Self Be True, is provided below in Table 3. Three participants attended this first session. RTS 1 and RTS 2 did not attend this session and their responses are blank.

Table 3. Session 1 Self-Empowerment Feedback Questionnaire Responses

Feedback Questions	Participant 1	Participant 3	Participant 21	RTS 1	RTS 2
1.What did you learn today?	I learned that there is nobody else that could be me	Who I am	No response		
2.What concepts will you apply to your life now?	Always being myself	Say out loud what I think	No response		
3.What did you hear today that is not realistic or confusing to you?	N/A	Everything was okay	No response		
4.What will you do differently now and why?	I want to try to be more confident	Say out loud my thoughts	Try and learn new things to help me with my future life		
5.What information should have	No response	Everything was okay	No response		

been included in this session?					
6.Do you have any questions or concerns?	No response	No.	No response		
7.Would you invite your friend to this session if this session were offered again? If yes, why? If no, why not?	No response	I have no friends.	If I had friends that I was close enough with, I would		
8.How are you feeling? How is it with your soul?	No response	I am feeling great.	No response		

The questionnaire data from Session 2, Personal Empowerment: Plan Your Work & Work Your Plan, is provided below in Table 4. Two participants attended this second session. Participant 1, RTS 1, and RTS 2 did not attend this session and their responses are blank.

Table 4. Session 2 Personal Empowerment Feedback Questionnaire Responses

Feedback Questions	Participant 1	Participant 3	Participant 21	RTS 1	RTS 2
1.What did you learn today?		My goals	When you have a positive attitude, you are more likely to have a positive outcome.		
2.What concepts will you apply to your life now?		Think more of what I want	To always be positive because you only have 1 life		
3.What did you hear today that is not realistic or confusing to you?		Nothing	No response		
4.What will you do differently now and why?		Think more to make good decisions.	No response		
5.What information should have		None. Everything Good.	No response		

been included in this session?					
6.Do you have any questions or concerns?		No.	No response		
7.Would you invite your friend to this session if this session were offered again? If yes, why? If no, why not?		Yes. If I find a friend.	No response		
8.How are you feeling? How is it with your soul?		I am feeling good and related.	I feel good		

The questionnaire data from Session 3, Professional Empowerment: Plan Your Work & Work Your Plan, is provided below in Table 5. Two participants attended this third session. Participant 1, RTS 1, and RTS 2 did not attend this session and their responses are blank.

Table 5. Session 3 Professional Empowerment Feedback Questionnaire Responses

Feedback Questions	Participant 1	Participant 3	Participant 21	RTS 1	RTS 2
1.What did you learn today?		Work on plan	To always be on time to important places so it shows that you care		
2.What concepts will you apply to your life now?		Dream	No response		
3.What did you hear today that is not realistic or confusing to you?		None.	No response		
4.What will you do differently now and why?		Think more	No response		
5.What information should have		None.	No response		

been included in this session?					
6.Do you have any questions or concerns?		No.	No response		
7.Would you invite your friend to this session if this session were offered again? If yes, why? If no, why not?		Yes, if I have a friend.	No response		
8.How are you feeling? How is it with your soul?		very good and calmed.	No response		

The questionnaire data from Session 4, Economic Empowerment: Money Matters, is provided below in Table 6. One participant attended this fourth session. Participant 1, Participant 3, RTS 1, and RTS 2 did not attend this session and their responses are blank.

Table 6. Session 4 Economic Empowerment Feedback Questionnaire Responses

Feedback Questions	Participant 1	Participant 3	Participant 21	RTS 1	RTS 2
1.What did you learn today?			To always save money in some kind of way		
2.What concepts will you apply to your life now?			To spend my money wisely		
3.What did you hear today that is not realistic or confusing to you?			No response		
4.What will you do differently now and why?			No response		
5.What information should have been included in this session?			No response		
6.Do you have any questions or concerns?			No response		

7. Would you invite your friend to this session if this session were offered again? If yes, why? If no, why not?			No response		
8. How are you feeling? How is it with your soul?			I feel good		

The questionnaire data from Session 5, Spiritual Empowerment: You Matter Because Black Lives Matter, is provided below in Table 7. One participant attended this fifth session. Participant 1, Participant 3, RTS 1, and RTS 2 did not attend this session and their responses are blank.

Table 7. Session 5 Spiritual Empowerment Feedback Questionnaire Responses

Feedback Questions	Participant 1	Participant 3	Participant 21	RTS 1	RTS 2
1. What did you learn today?			That everything you do or say matters		
2. What concepts will you apply to your life now?			No response		
3. What did you hear today that is not realistic or confusing to you?			No response		
4. What will you do differently now and why?			To use my voice because I matter		
5. What information should have been included in this session?			No response		
6. Do you have any questions or concerns?			No response		
7. Would you invite your friend to this			No response		

session if this session were offered again? If yes, why? If no, why not?					
8.How are you feeling? How is it with your soul?			I feel confident		

The questionnaire data from Session 6, Focus Group Wrap-Up, is provided below in Table 8. One participant attended this last session. Participant 1, Participant 3, RTS 1, and RTS 2 did not attend this session and their responses are blank.

Table 8. Session 6 Focus Group Wrap-Up Feedback Questionnaire Responses

Feedback Questions	Participant 1	Participant 3	Participant 21	RTS 1	RTS 2
1.What did you learn today?			That you can learn new things or come across something good when you meet new people.		
2.What concepts will you apply to your life now?			To keep going and don't give up		
3.What did you hear today that is not realistic or confusing to you?			No response		
4.What will you do differently now and why?			To learn new things and try new stuff, and meet new people		
5.What information should have been included in this session?			No response		
6.Do you have any questions or concerns?			No response		
7.Would you invite your friend to this session if this session were			Yes, because it could probably benefit us into doing good		

offered again? If yes, why? If no, why not?					
8.How are you feeling? How is it with your soul?			No response		

Participant 21's responses for all six empowerment sessions are provided in Table 9 for comparison. This table presents the feedback with evidence of the transformation.

Table 9. Responses from Participant 21 on the Session Feedback Questionnaires

Feedback Questions	Session 1	Session 2	Session 3	Session 4	Session 5	Session 6
1.What did you learn today?	No response	When you have a positive attitude, you are more likely to have a positive outcome.	To always be on time to important places so it shows that you care	To always save money in some kind of way	That everything you do or say matters	That you can learn new things or come across something good when you meet new people.
2.What concepts will you apply to your life now?	No response	To always be positive because you only have 1 life	No response	To spend my money wisely	No response	To keep going and don't give up
3.What did you hear today that is not realistic or confusing to you?	No response	No response	No response	No response	No response	No response
4.What will you do differently now and why?	Try and learn new things to help me with my future life	No response	No response	No response	To use my voice because I matter	To learn new things and try new stuff, and meet new people
5.What information should have been included in this session?	No response	No response	No response	No response	No response	No response
6.Do you have any questions or concerns?	No response	No response	No response	No response	No response	No response
7.Would you invite your friend	If I had friends that I	No response	No response	No response	No response	Yes, because it

to this session if this session were offered again? If yes, why? If no, why not?	was close enough with, I would					could probably benefit us into doing good
8.How are you feeling? How is it with your soul?	No response	I feel good	No response	I feel good	I feel confident	No response

The questionnaire data from Session 6, Focus Group Wrap-Up, is provided below.

One participant, Participant 21, attended this last session. Participant 1, Participant 3, RTS 1, and RTS 2 did not attend this session. The questions and corresponding response for the Focus Group Discussion Feedback reveals a candor and transparency about this formative six-week process for Participant 21.

Focus Group Discussion Feedback (Participant 21)

1. How do you feel about life after high school and high school graduation?

Sometimes life is boring. Basically, I do things on my own and I have more responsibilities.

2. Do you feel like life is harder now?

I feel like life is slightly harder now. Life is not bad. School was enough. I am glad to have a break from school.

3. How do you feel about being an adult now?

I feel good about being an adult now. I am responsible now and I make my own money.

4. If there is one thing you could change, what would it be?

I'm not sure.

5. Are you confident and comfortable with your life goals? What are you confident about? What are you scared of?

I am confident in my career. Life is scary with the prices going up and laws changing and everything going to crap. People aren't happy.

6. What do you need to be successful?

A good mindset.

7. How do you feel about giving back to this community? What would you do? How would you like to give back?

I think it is a good thing to do, to give back to the community. I think it would be helpful to donate clothes, food, canned foods.

8. What financial support and resources would be of benefit to you?

I'm not sure.

9. What worked well in this six-week program? How did it impact you for the better? What was effective? Do you feel like this six-week program gave you the tools that you need to succeed?

To have positive thoughts and that I have an understanding that I am special. All sessions were effective.

10. What needs to be improved about this six-week program? What did not work?

What do you suggest to improve the program? What was the most important information that you received?

[There was] nothing weird or corny. [I think you should] promote this more so more can see and attend. More brochures, put on the township website. My mom told me [about this program]. She found it on the website.

Additional comments offered by Coach Audrey Taylor and Kimberly Banks noted that a culinary program in high school would be a great incentive to those interested in culinary arts. In addition to the basketball skills training offered, a workshop to share culinary skills would be a fantastic addition to this program. The question was asked why

Participant 21 completed the six-week program. These final comments were shared at the end of the focus group discussion by Participant 21, and clearly affirms the success of this project:

This program helped me to come to an understanding of how life works. This program will help a lot of people. This program will help a lot of people to have a plan. I learned financial[s] in school already, but this was a reminder. Overall, I think it was good. This program taught me that I could be better and do more and I want to learn more. So, I opened myself up to something new and this is why I was committed to the entire six weeks. This program can provide more workshops and create networks for young adults in the community.

The last research instrument used for collecting data about the success and progress of this project was the one-on-one personal interview. One participant, Participant 21, scheduled and attended the personal interview. Participant 1, Participant 3, RTS 1, and RTS 2 did not participate in the personal interviews. The questions and corresponding response for the personal interview are honest and demonstrates a change during this formative six-week process for Participant 21.

One-on-One Personal Interview for Participant 21

When asked question one, “what did you decide to do after high school graduation,” Participant 21 stated that after high school graduation, they had a normal summer and attended one semester of college. Participant 21 only completed one semester because they felt like college was just a repeat of high school. Participant 21 graduated June 2021 and will be nineteen years old in the summer.

When asked question two, “what is your means of making income,” Participant 21 stated that they make income by working in the food industry. Participant 21 works

ten hours a week. Outside of work, they stay at home, chill out at the beach, and hang out with friends.

When asked question three, “do you live on your own, with a roommate, or with family,” Participant 21 responded that they live with family.

When asked question four, “what is your mode of transportation? What is your mode of communication,” Participant 21 responded that they own their own car, and they own their own cell phone.

When asked question five, “what is your source of food each day,” Participant 21 responded that they go out to eat, they eat their parent’s food, and they cook their own food also.

When asked question six, “what do you need to be successful in your career/job,” Participant 21 responded that to be successful, they need time to think and learn, and they need motivation. Participant 21 needs to be motivated to be a big thinker, but they just won’t do it.

When asked question seven, “did high school give you the tools to succeed? If yes, why? If no, what’s needed,” Participant 21 responded that high school did not really give them the tools they need to be successful. Participant 21 mentioned that classes like the one they experienced in this project will help. Participant 21 offered the example of the conversation held the same day as the interview, Session 4: Economic Empowerment: Money Matters, was helpful. Participant 21 then said that classes in high school are not real, and they are not for the real world. Participant 21 reiterated that practical learning is needed. Participant 21 felt like high school is a waste of time based on what students

learn. Participant 21 was excited to mention that they played a musical instrument in orchestra, and then named the actual musical instrument they played.

When asked question eight, “we created a budget. Do you think you will be able to follow your budget? If yes, can you take care of your financial responsibilities? If no, what do you do to take care of your needs,” Participant 21 thinks they will be able to follow their budget. Participant 21 surmises that, perhaps not now but as they get older and have more experience, a budget will make more sense. Participant 21 said, “As days go by and I get older, I will get more of an understanding.” Yes, Participant 21 can take care of their needs with their current budget. Participant 21 will get motivated if they can find something interesting to learn.

When asked question nine, “are you a registered voter? Are you involved in giving back in Franklin? If yes, how so? How are you giving back to our community? What do you do,” Participant 21 affirmed that “yes,” they are a registered voter. “No,” Participant 21 does not give back to the community.

When asked question ten, “what do you need to be successful and confident in your life after high school,” Participant 21 shared that to be successful they need to learn more and gain more experience in the world. Participant 21 wants to know how things work like building credit and paying bills. This concluded the personal interview. The one-on-one personal interview was approximately fifteen minutes, as scheduled and planned.

Analysis of Data Collection

After providing the data for each research instrument, this next section will analyze the data from two perspectives, the participant, and then the six-week project overall.

RTS 1 and RTS 2 attended the recruiting sessions only. They did not attend the six empowerment sessions. Both signed the letter of consent and completed the pre-project questionnaire. They did not finish the project and thus the comparison of their responses against the post-project questionnaire is not possible. Given their responses on the pre-project questionnaire, both would have benefited from attending the empowerment sessions.

RTS 1 admitted to being “confused and lost.” RTS 1 responded that “my life is not even close to where I wanna be” and “I need to get further than where I am.” Lastly, RTS 1 said, “I am not very happy [with] my life [and] where I am, but I would like to be.” RTS 1 responded with three life goals and admitted that economic management is a problem. Lastly, RTS 1 expressed a desire to give back and volunteer in the community but “never knew where to start.” This six-week project had the potential to affect a positive change on this participant’s trajectory about their life.

RTS 2 affirms that they are “caring and respectful” and “tries to bring the best out of people,” yet RTS 2 is “not 100% satisfied” on where they are in their life due to “a lot of distractions.” However, RTS 2 listed out their five-year, ten-year, and fifteen-year life goals and volunteers giving back to the community through a local council organization. The six-week sessions would have benefited RTS 2 because RTS 2 admitted they had no economic management training and did not know how to budget. This project’s training

would have had a direct influence and the potential to impact their life goals, which was to buy a house, own land and make good profit on leasing property.

Participant 1 attended the first session only. Participant 1 signed the letter of consent. Participant 1 did not complete the pre-project questionnaire. However, Participant 1 did complete the Session 1 Self-Empowerment feedback questionnaire. Overall, this project was a benefit to this project participant, which is evidenced by the feedback received. Participant 1 learned about what it means to be unique and like no one else. The concept of being true to oneself is what the participant desires to apply to their life. And lastly, the ability to be more confident is the one behavior that the participant will try to do differently now.

The conclusion drawn is that this project would have been a greater benefit to this participant if Participant 1 attended all sessions. There would have been more opportunities to affirm this participant's desire to change and how to effectively do so. After attempting to reach out by email and text to attend, Participant 1 did not attend any more sessions. Participant 1 also did not respond to any messages or emails. The reason for no response is unknown. Lastly, the reason(s) why Participant 1 chose to stop participating in this project are also unknown.

Participant 3 attended the first three sessions. Participant 3 signed the letter of consent, completed the pre-project questionnaire, and responded to all questions asked on the session feedback questionnaires. On the pre-project questionnaire, Participant 3 describes themselves as successful and hard-working. Their goals are to work hard and live peacefully with no debt. Therefore, the focus on their life is to work hard and save for a car. Giving back to the community is not a focus because work is the priority.

Participant 3 did not complete the post-project questionnaire and hence there is no ability to compare pre- and post-results to determine if any change or transformation occurred during this project.

However, there is evidence of learning in Participant 3 based on the feedback provided during the three sessions they attended. In the first session on self-empowerment, Participant 3 learned who they are and that it is important to vocalize their thoughts out loud. In the second session on personal empowerment, Participant 3 learned the importance of their goals and wants to apply the concept of thinking more about what they want out of life. When asked the question what you will do differently, Participant 3 stated that they will think more to make good decisions. This is excellent feedback to demonstrate an impact and change in Participant 3's life and posture of thought. Participant 3 experienced a connection and left the session feeling "good and related." The last session Participant 3 attended was the session on professional empowerment. This participant shared on the feedback questionnaire that they learned how to work on plan. The power to dream is the concept they will apply to their life. They plan to think more as a way of doing life differently and they walked away from their final session feeling "very good and calmed."

The conclusion drawn is that this project was a benefit to Participant 3. The notable observation is that this participant moved to a new state and looked for an opportunity to meet more people in their age group and learn the community. Participant 3 found their voice, learned the importance of using their voice, and understood the power of dreaming. Albeit Participant 3 came into the project with a strong work ethic and a focus on working hard to save money, Participant 3 learned the importance of

thinking more about their life goals and how to make good life decisions. This project was a great benefit because Participant 3 left with their Life Plan and how to work their Life Plan. If this participant had attended all sessions, more life lessons and a greater sense of empowerment would have been possible. There would have been more opportunities to affirm this participant's desire to change and how to effectively do so. After attempting to reach out by email and text to attend, Participant 3 did not attend any more sessions. Participant 3 also did not respond to any messages or emails. The reason for no response is unknown. Lastly, the reason(s) why Participant 3 chose to stop participating in this project are also unknown.

Participant 21 attended and fully participated in all six sessions. Participant 21 signed the letter of consent, completed the pre-project and post-project questionnaires, and completed the one-on-one personal interview. Participant 21 also completed the session feedback questionnaires for all six sessions (See Table 9).

In comparison to the pre-project and post-project questionnaire (see Table 2), there is evidence that this project positively impacted Participant 21. Based on the eight questions asked, Participant 21 answered only one question on the pre-project questionnaire — but four questions on the post-project questionnaire. However, the post-project questionnaire's response affirmed Participant 21's self-description and clearly articulated their life goal. Participant 21 articulated a life plan and is now registered to vote. Participant 21 did not respond about economic management and giving back to the community on either questionnaire. Nevertheless, Participant 21 desires a good mindset, knows their life plan, and wants to continue to learn and grow.

During the six sessions, Participant 21 completed the session feedback questionnaires, and most responses were blank on the questionnaires (see Table 9). The session feedback questionnaire had eight questions to complete. During Session 1 on Self- Empowerment, Participant 21 answered two questions affirming that they will do life differently now to “try and learn new things” because it will help them with their future life. Lastly, Participant 21 would invite a friend to this self-empowerment session if they had a close enough friend to invite. During Session 2 on Personal Empowerment, Participant 21 answered three of the eight questions. Participant 21 learned in the session to “have a positive attitude” which will more likely result in a “positive outcome.” The concept that Participant 21 heard in this session that they will apply to their life is to “always be positive because you only have one life.” During Session 3 on Professional Empowerment, Participant 21 only answered the first question stating that they learned “to always be on time to important places so it shows that you care.” During Session 4 on Economic Empowerment, Participant 21 was the only participant to attend, and yet their response on the last question about how you are feeling, they responded, “I feel good.” The learning for Participant 21 noted “to always save money in some kind of way” and the application to their life is to “spend my money wisely.” During Session 5 on Spiritual Empowerment, Participant 21 answered three of the eight questions. Participant 21 stated that they felt confident and learned that “everything you do or say matters” and “to use my voice because I matter.” The final session, session 6 was the focus group wrap-up session, and Participant 21 answered the most questions this time; they answered four out of the eight questions asked. Participant 21 expressed what they learned, what they would do differently, concepts that they would apply to their life, and the need to include their

friends. Participant 21 said that meeting new people, trying new things, and learning new things creates good. Also, Participant 21 desires to keep going, and not to give up. Lastly, the inclusion of friends in these sessions would be of benefit for them to do good also.

Participant 21 demonstrated the need to know, learn, think, and grow in the one-on-one personal interview and the focus group discussion. Participant 21 acknowledged the need to be a big thinker to accomplish their professional goals. The content in the sessions apply but other concepts may apply later with more life experiences such as the economic empowerment and budgeting conversations. Participant 21 did reiterate that these empowerment sessions were more realistic and practical than the high school coursework. The need to learn, build credit, pay bills, and experience life more will generate more confidence in Participant 21. During the focus group discussion, Participant 21 provided feedback that the session provided more confidence and assurance during this time of transition into adulthood. Participant 21 feels more responsible now, confident in their own career, and making their own money. Participant 21 needs “a good mindset” to be successful and understands that giving back to the community is a “good thing to do.” Participant 21 emphasized that this six-week program was a positive impact. Participant 21 stated that all sessions were effective, they know to have positive thoughts, and they have an understanding that “I am special.”

The analysis of the data suggests successes, failures, and improvements for the future. The success is the transformation evidenced. The responses continued to show progression and transformation. The responses were thoughtful and meaningful about the learning process and transformational change. The failure of this project is that four out of the five participants dropped out of the project before the conclusion of the project and

the reasons are unknown. The improvements for the future will be based on assumptions and feedback received from the context associates. This data illustrates the problem. This data also supports the hypothesis. However, there are additional components to contemplate to affect more change in this segment of the Franklin community.

Outcome

The outcome of this project nets a positive change. In this section, there is a brief analysis about each session during the six-week project. The analysis of each session is based on observation. The complete overall analysis and assessment of this project follows with the type of change demonstrated by the participants of this project.

Session 1: Self-Empowerment: To Thine Own Self Be True

The session went well as outlined in the amount of time allocated for each section with a thorough review of the agenda. For this session, a PowerPoint presentation was used; however, this form of presentation conveyed more of a school type look and feel than anticipated. This would be the first and last time I used PowerPoint and a laptop for any session moving forward. I also changed the desks and put them in a circle for the rest of the sessions instead of classroom style like it was during Session 1. The last observation was the candor of the pre-project questionnaires and feedback. The questionnaire for the end of the self-empowerment session did come back with surprisingly honest feedback.

Session 2: Personal Empowerment: Plan Your Work & Work Your Plan

The program flow for this session was less formal. The group sat in desks within a circle to promote more group discussion. Two participants came. The RTS participants did not come. A member of the Board of Education, Walter Jackson, Jr., stopped in to visit and he joined the discussion. The young adult male seemed to open up, dialogue, and share more as a result of another male presence in the group circle. Both participants were more open and conversational. The program flow was smooth and easy. Due to having laryngitis, the participants had to participate more than planned, which shifted the conversation and created more synergy in the room. Both participants read and shared in the Opening Thoughts, Spiritual Affirmation, Centering Activity and Word for The Day. The conversation around creating a Life Plan was full and rich. I provided notebooks for note taking. I provided the Life Plan to write down thoughts and priorities. Neither participant wrote notes nor made updates to their Life Plan. This group is clearly more verbal and auditory. Writing and reading does not seem to be their preference.

Session 3: Professional Empowerment: Plan Your Work & Work Your Plan

I learned the individual ages of each participant and they were eighteen and nineteen years old. Both had one to two semesters of college. Both are gainfully employed in local jobs in two distinct industries — food and animals. The interaction this week was much more dialogue, conversation, and engagement. The group is more comfortable with each other and more interactive.

Based on observation, conversation, and dialogue, the following are pertinent findings. This age group needs community. The feedback on the questionnaire and in

conversation each week continues to reveal that friendships and relationships are difficult and a challenge. The ability to balance work and life is not as easy. The grind of work is prevalent and foremost in their minds. Also, the ability to make friends seems to happen at work mostly. The time to connect in the community is not as much a priority. Seeing a long-term vision for their life is not easy. The most they can envision out is about six months. Project participants were more open to the opening thoughts and affirmations. They welcomed the opportunity to read and share their thoughts. I planned two ice breakers just in case the other three participants showed, but they did not so ice breakers were not necessary. As it stands, this group has clearly created community.

Session 4: Economic Empowerment: Money Matters

Only one project participant attended this session. They were participatory and we finished the session thirty minutes early. I was able to reschedule the one-on-one personal interview since we were the only two in attendance and the session ended early. The other participant could not attend because they shared last week that they had to work on Thursday to be available to be with their father for Father's Day weekend. Unfortunately, this participant did not attend any more sessions. They did not attend Session 4, Session 5, and Session 6. They did not respond to any of my reminder emails and texts I sent each week.

This was the last session at Franklin High School. The last day of school was the following week and the school closed at noon. There are notable observations after the first four sessions. I requested participants to write their food options for dinner and snacks on an index card. Both participants offered their thoughts and opinions. I

requested the same for music options for their specific empowerment playlist. No one shared their favorite songs for inclusion on the playlist for this group. No one took notes ever in any session at any time. They reviewed the worksheets, but they never wrote any notes. I offered notepads to the participants, and they did not pick up, look at, or use the notepads once. The only time they wrote was to complete the session questionnaires.

Session 5: Spiritual Empowerment: You Matter Because Black Lives Matter

Only one project participant attended this session. They were participatory and we finished the session thirty minutes early. We met at Colonial Park in Somerset for the Spiritual Empowerment Session. The groundhog, the birds, the people eating, and children playing at the playground made this a distinct experience. Conversations around the importance of giving back, connecting to the community, and connecting with one's spirituality were especially meaningful in this setting as we sat under the sun and the clouds eating and talking about the importance of the participant's life. The participant was especially open and receptive to the messages given that evening. This evening God showed me that this project is a success. I distinctly remember why this project came to be. During this session, I saw the project's purpose unfold as I affirmed every empowering spiritual message into the life of this participant. This participant reminded me of all young Black men who need to know their value and worth in the community. This project is in honor of and in memory of Samaad Z. Frazier. Samaad Z. Frazier was taken from the Franklin community too soon; he was born in June 2000 and pushed into eternity in December 2019. The spiritual empowerment session was powerful.

Session 6: Focus Group Wrap-Up Discussion

This last session was held at an upscale local restaurant, Stateside Tap and Tavern, in Somerset. I invited Coach Audrey Taylor and Kimberly Banks, Samaad's mother, to hear the feedback. For this last session, I did send a reminder text and email and received a confirmation response from Participant 21 only. The four of us had a fine dining experience. Participant 21 was shy and introverted the first five to ten minutes of this session. But they quickly warmed up and engaged most interestingly during this session. Due to the richness of the conversation, the session ended fifteen minutes later than planned. Participant 21 answered the focus group questions, completed the session feedback questionnaire, and completed the post-project questionnaire also. There was enough time to eat, talk, network, and share with Participant 21. Participant 21 gained a stronger network and built greater connections because of sharing their interests and passions. Coach Audrey Taylor and Kimberly Banks agreed with Participant 21 that this program was a success, and they look forward to seeing the program grow.

The data results illustrate that this six-week project was a success. Based on this analysis overall, the project outcome is a positive result. The change was both cognitive and affective. The cognitive change is evident based on their willingness to think more and shift their mindsets. The affective change is their ability to articulate their feelings and open their hearts and minds to change and transformation. More time in the program and more time with the participants could potentially result in a conative change. However, evidence of a conative change is possible given the results of the analysis. Perhaps asking participants to commit to changed behavior and demonstrate that

commitment to change over a longer period is a future consideration to measure conative change.

Deviations Required to Ensure Success

Due to unforeseen challenges, the recruitment process required additional time and additional networking within the Franklin Township community. And the recruitment process required multiple meetings with multiple community leaders and school administrators up to and including School Superintendent Doctor John Ravally, Franklin High School's Principal, Doctor Nicholas Solomon, Franklin High School's Athletic Director, Kenneth Margolin, and Road To Success Vice Principal Nikkii Tatum. I scheduled meetings with the Operation Great Expectation Director Carla Beverly as well as the Franklin Youth Center Manager Sharene Davenport. I initially held meetings with several youth organizations and their directors in April, which were facilitated by Benjamin Guy. Additional follow-up conversations were required with my context associates team up to and including Doctor Nicholas Solomon, Coach Audrey Taylor, and Nancy LaCorte to receive guidance about increasing participation and interest.

The additional month of recruitment did not profit as much gain as expected. The start date of the project was Thursday May 26. Regardless of the number of registrants, the project team, under the advisement of my faculty mentor, decided that the start date should not change. The project sessions began on Thursday, May 26 with the understanding that recruitment for this age group is difficult and whosoever will, shall come. Despite the late start, I completed the project in six sessions and ended on June 30, which ended on time as planned.

Summary of Learning

This proactive action research method provides opportunities to engage community-based research and complements the prophetic activism framework significantly. First, the proactive action research method has been employed for social movements, social action initiatives, and practitioner's research.¹ Second, practical theologians use this method to explore, assess, alter, reimagine, implement, and then repeat this process iteratively.² This research method is “an iterative project cycle with action, research, and reflection guided by a leader” yet welcomes others in the group and on the project team to affect social change and positive transformation, which is the goal.³ This method within the prophetic activism framework proves that this project serves a need in the Franklin Township community. Based on an accurate assessment of the need and the collection and analysis of the data, the hypothesis has been proven to be a sound solution that will effectively support the youth of Franklin Township. This project will repeat this project cycle based on this inaugural implementation with improvements for the second cohort group. The second cohort group should also expect positive transformation and change because of the support of the hypothesis during this project implementation.

¹ Paul Bramer and Mark Chapman, “Action Research for Doctor of Ministry Project: A Practical Definition,” *Journal of Christian Ministry* 6 (April 2017): 28-29, <https://journal.dmineducation.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Vol6Action-Research-for-DMin-Projects-Paul-D-G-Bramer-Mark-Chapman.pdf>.

² Bramer and Chapman, *Journal of Christian Ministry*, 29.

³ Bramer and Chapman, *Journal of Christian Ministry*, 29.

Hypothesis: Supported and Negated

There is a significant gap in racial wealth in the state of New Jersey. Financial stability among other stress factors such as likely imprisonment for nonviolent offenses in New Jersey is a concern for young people in Franklin who are not college or military bound. Societal pressures and social distractions can deter them from choosing to live a productive, socially responsible, and socially engaged life. Using the prophetic activism approach to community development with culturally sensitive and faith-based organizations, there can be an increase in socially and civically responsible young citizens in Franklin Township. The hypothesis for this project is that if Franklin Township's Black youth receive Christian spiritual mentorship, then Franklin's Black youth will be prepared to transition into adulthood while circumventing societal distractions and pressures.

A summary of the data reveals that the hypothesis was supported. Despite the recruitment challenges to gather a group of seven to ten young adults, the collection of data still proves that the mentorship program is needed and beneficial to affect social transformative change for the Black youth in Franklin Township. Data gathered from the pre-project questionnaires illuminates that all participants expressed their individual needs, and they wanted opportunities to learn more as they transition into adulthood. The three participants who attended the sessions highlighted their lessons learned, concepts they learned that they would apply to their life, and what they would do differently because of the project. These results serve as proof that this project and the mentoring was effective and promotes positive transformative change.

This is important because this project may be designed to affect change one life at a time. The last participant who was able to complete all six weeks ended the program remarkably different than when the program started. Initially Participant 21 joined the group as notably reserved and shy. Participant 21 would not engage in conversation in any significant way. Participant 21 could not even introduce themselves to the group. By the end of the program, the energy, zest, zeal, and willingness to be open, speak, and engage in conversation with the adults in the final focus group wrap-up demonstrates the social change and willingness to learn, grow, and think differently.

How Can This Project Be Replicated?

This project has the potential to be replicated in a few ways. This project can be replicated with a wider criterion to empower more youth. This project can be replicated outside of Franklin Township. Young adults from other townships could have participated in this project, but the criteria excluded them from this project. This project can be replicated with a different age group. Younger adults in high school expressed interest in this program. Adolescents between the ages of fifteen to seventeen were interested. Also, this project can be replicated without the college bound or military bound criteria. There were college students who saw the flyers and expressed interest, but the criteria excluded them from this project.

The expansion of this project has the potential to reach more communities within Central New Jersey based on the support and influences of the project's context associates. Given the network of professional associates, this can be expanded throughout New Jersey and into other states. First New Birth Baptist Church is in Virginia. The

potential to start this program in Virginia is a reasonable, viable option. This six-week program is an empowerment program geared to young adults who are seeking a plan and a purpose for their life within their own collegial network and community.

As a qualitative research project, the concepts of replicability, transferability, and generalizability were explored. Despite the project's limitations, this project has transferable attributes and can be examined against other research projects focused on youth empowerment and mentorship.⁴ Transferability enables connections to happen between various types of qualitative research projects and offers meaning and impact with a project that is contrasted against another qualitative research project.⁵ Formal generalizability is one criteria that serves quantitative research well but is hard to determine with this project due to the specific targeted population within this specific ministry context. As a result of this ministry context studied, generalizability is achieved through the resonance marker, which assesses the impact on participants and thus may be able to transfer to other ministry contexts.⁶ Formal generalizability allows other researchers to predict how this study could impact their ministry context or their targeted population.⁷

⁴ Sarah Tracy, *Qualitative Research Methods: Collecting Evidence, Crafting Analysis, Communicating Impact* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell Publishing, 2013), 250, 267.

⁵ Tracy, *Qualitative Research Methods*, 239.

⁶ Tracy, *Qualitative Research Methods*, 229.

⁷ Tracy, *Qualitative Research Methods*, 248.

Future Projections: What Could Work Better in the Future

The vice principal of the alternative high school did offer feedback to improve the project when this transitions into a program. Nikkii Tatum reinforced how powerful this program is and that she is a strong advocate for this program. Nikkii Tatum genuinely believes in this program. She continues to share with me how powerful and much needed this program is in Franklin with the hopes that it will continue.

Nikkii Tatum's additional feedback was based on transportation, location, and timing of the project. Lack of transportation is a concern. She suggested that this project should be held at the alternative high school to avoid transportation issues. Other students wanted to participate, but transportation was a deterrent to drive to another location. Furthermore, the project sessions should be held weekly from September to March or at least for six to ten months. She believes that retention of information will be more adequately reinforced to promote social transformation more effectively. Her recommendation is to take each week's module and translate that into one month to review each empowerment session. She also shared that the project should be extended with more time, such as a year, for research to see and determine if there is an impact on the participant's life. This extension of time and space will provide more opportunity to test the conative change. A conative change tests their commitment to changed behavior over time and how their commitment will make Franklin Township better. She believes that the next year's graduating class will be more open and receptive to this empowerment project. The project should start at the beginning of the school year and spread out the activities to address each topic for a month.

Additional feedback and options for the future success of this project are varied. The idea of conducting one-on-one empowerment sessions may be a viable option. One participant did ask for this request as it may address their concerns of not having a life plan. The emotions, embarrassment, or social peer pressure that goes along with this need was apparent during the open recruitment session. Also, the original idea of conducting the empowerment session as an all-day conference remains an option. Additionally, the idea of a two-day weekend get-away empowerment retreat is an idea to improve the successful implementation of this project with this age group. Removing all project criteria may open more possibilities to reach the younger generation, but the need to establish community among this targeted population is still necessary. A slight modification may be warranted, but I think the attention to recruitment and finding this specific population is relevant. They are clearly a lost community in Franklin and their invisibility after high school graduation should not be ignored.

Project Participants: Project Success and Improvements

The criteria and eligibility of the participants were challenging. I was advised that the recruitment would be the most difficult component of the implementation of this project. The time required to get the message into the community about this initial project was more than expected. The project team did not anticipate the need for heavy recruiting that was involved to gain momentum in Franklin Township. Also, the project team did not realize that once this population graduates, there is no way to track their existence. This subgroup in the Franklin community is invisible. Regardless, once the start date was

set for Thursday, May 26, 2022, then the registration and project implementation proceeded as planned.

The project team offered assurances that increased participation will come with time. The initial cohort of participants may be small, but once the program gains traction and notoriety within Franklin, then the next set of empowerment sessions will grow. Once trust and confidence are built with the project team in the community, then more young adults will come. The feedback during the final session highlights that more advertising and marketing are important.

The success of the project is evident by the learnings shared and the need to do more. The focus group session offered additional types of workshops to offer based on participant's interests, such as a basketball clinic, work skills training, and culinary arts workshop. The participation in this inaugural session from May to June 2022 provided hope for a brighter implementation in 2023 with the second cohort group.

Principal Investigator: Project Success and Improvements

As the Principal Investigator, there are a few successes worthy of illumination. The curriculum design was age appropriate and relevant. The length of time of each session was realistic and purposeful. The design and implementation of the program was validated. The ambiance in the sessions was meaningful with empowering songs on the playlist and festive food to brighten the session and lighten the mood. The energy and the positive vibes created a comfortable, warm, and inviting session to promote positive change in the participants. The success of the project came down to the trust within the group.

There were sensitivities around the limited number of participants, but I soon realized from other participants that this age group is the most difficult and most challenging group to reach. I also realized that my focus must remain on quality and not quantity. This project was birthed out of the senseless death of a young man, a recent high school graduate, in Franklin Township. I had to remember that my ministry focus and ministry purpose have never been on numbers, but the opportunity to reach out to many with the hopes of reaching and touching one. One soul was touched by this project. This one soul continues to reach out and ask for guidance, work referrals, and support for building their business. This one soul stayed focused and desires to live out their dreams and not give up. Mission successfully accomplished. Mission complete based on trust.

As a result of the limited number of participants, the ability to establish trust was important among the participants first and foremost. Therefore, the opportunity to invite others to facilitate the empowerment sessions was not feasible. There was great benefit with the small group dynamics. As host and facilitator, assessing the change in group dynamics and group chemistry is required. With time, trust and camaraderie were established. In the future, this assessment will be made to determine who best to include and when best to engage others during the empowerment sessions. For future implementations, the context associates and professional associates offered their input and feedback to ensure positive social transformation and change. These inputs will be taken into consideration as this project moves forward as an official program of First New Birth Baptist Church.

Significant Aspects of the Intensives and Focus Group Sessions

This doctoral program was inclusive of weekly intensives in virtual online sessions and in person in Dayton, Ohio, as well as both virtual and in person focus group sessions with the Prophetic Activism cohort. The network gained from attending the weekly intensives in August and January each year is immeasurable. There is a significant benefit to see and know more clergy who are like-minded. The opportunity to hear sound theological preaching and to hear lectures on relevant topics that impact ministry has been optimal. The same sentiments are echoed regarding the Prophetic Activism cohort.

The relationships established and built in the Prophetic Activism cohort are priceless. Reverend Doctor D. Anthony Everett, the faculty mentor, is a treasured relationship. Reverend Doctor D. Anthony Everett has elevated my prophetic voice and awakened a prophetic fire that increases my zeal and zest to affect change in my ministerial context. My prophetic boldness and prophetic courage are a direct result of being in this cohort with like-minded activists who desire to affect change in their communities also.

How Did This Doctoral Program Affect Me Personally and Professionally?

The opportunity to enroll in a doctoral program and pursue a doctoral degree was a dream dead at worst or a dream deferred at best. Having secured one bachelor's degree and two master's degrees left me thinking that a doctoral degree is asking too much of my family. I and my husband have three daughters who need to attend college and complete their degrees. However, God knows the desires of my heart and having a

doctoral degree has always been a dream and a goal of mine. I thought it was a selfish dream and a goal that should be tabled until all my daughters graduated from college — at a minimum. Nevertheless, God used the prophetic voice of Reverend Doctor D.

Anthony Everett to empower me to pursue my dream. Unbeknownst to me, Reverend Doctor D. Anthony Everett reached out to me via Facebook to share with me the cohort's scripture focus, which God knew would catch my attention because Luke 4 is my church's ministry focus and one of my favorite verses when answering my call to ministry. The recruitment and enrollment processes were seamless. I was successfully matriculating in the doctoral program within two months.

Professionally, this doctoral program has properly prepared me to be an expert in the church. This doctoral program qualifies me. This doctoral cohort equipped me to deal with the challenges, obstacles, and realities of doing ministry from the cross to the community. United Theological Seminary has provided the skills, training, learning opportunities, networking moments, mentoring sessions, and research opportunities that has elevated my confidence, expertise, and abilities to do ministry effectively and efficiently. After the completion of this doctoral program, I look forward to the opportunities that God will choose for my ministry work. I wait with great expectation how God will move in the future implementation of this project in Franklin Township. Lastly, I remain open to any professional opportunities to do ministry with confidence and assurance because I know that I am highly qualified given the extensive and intensive training and preparation that I received in this doctoral program at United Theological Seminary.

Greatest Joys and Sorrows on This Doctoral Journey

The greatest joys and the greatest sorrows on this doctoral journey are both personal and being a member of the Prophetic Activism cohort. The greatest sorrows included a personal injury I suffered in my first two months of enrollment and the death of my husband's grandmother. During the first semester of this doctoral program, I suffered a back injury that resulted in insufferable, excruciating pain and my immobilization. I required consistent and constant medical attention for over a year up to and including back surgery. As of semester four, I am no longer in pain, and I can walk, move, and function without pain or suffering. Despite the challenges I suffered, with the support of my family, my faculty mentor, and my editor, I was able to persevere and complete this program. In July 2021, I was able to spend time with my last living grandmother. My husband's grandmother, Marguerite Dudley Gregorie, at the age of 100 years transitioned into eternity in September 2021. I knew when we were leaving, and she wanted to pray for us that she was offering her final blessing for us in prayer to God. I am reminded that earth has no sorrow that Heaven cannot heal. Time and space have brought healing and a strength to move forward with opportunities to reflect on the joys in the journey.

The greatest joys in this doctoral program range from personal accomplishments to highlights in this doctoral program and the Prophetic Activism cohort. In 2021, my youngest daughter, Chloe Alexandra Jackson, started high school and was elected class president in her freshman and sophomore years. During this doctoral journey, I have witnessed three graduations in 2022, which has kept me highly motivated. My niece, Nyemah Yasmeen King, graduated with her bachelor's degree from Norfolk State

University. My middle daughter, Jasmine Monique Jackson, graduated with the class of 2022 with her high school diploma from Franklin High School and is now matriculating at Johnson C. Smith University. My oldest daughter, Tiana Joy Jackson, graduated with her bachelor's degree from University of Illinois Chicago. In 2023, I will graduate with my doctoral degree, and then my oldest daughter will graduate with her master's in business administration degree.

The highlights of being a doctoral scholar are the opportunities I have had to travel and network with powerful leaders in the ministry. I had the opportunity to meet some renown preachers, pastors, and clergy at United. I had the opportunity to preach and minister with other congregations because of this program. I have also had the opportunity to meet powerful community leaders in Franklin because of this doctoral cohort. Finally, I have had the opportunity to travel and see ministry in this country and across the world.

The opportunity to travel to see different ministry contexts was a priceless experience. I have seen ministry in Indiana, Ohio, and Ghana, Africa. The opportunity to see a campus ministry in Indiana at Purdue University exemplifies the work to reach the younger generation. The opportunity to see ministry in Ohio in the African Methodist Episcopal setting with a female pastor was a rewarding experience. Finally, the pilgrimage to Ghana, Africa, was the most humbling experience in this program. The opportunity to go to Mother Africa and sit in the same space and place of the enslaved ancestors was surreal. The feelings and thoughts overtake me. Lastly, I had the opportunity to showcase my ministry context in New Jersey. As the host for the April 2022 focus group meeting, the experience was affirming for me. I was able to highlight

what ministry outside of the four walls of the church building looks like and how prophetic activism comes to life within a non-traditional ministry context.

What Did I Learn About Myself?

On this doctoral journey, I learned that I am stronger than I realize. I learned that I am built for perseverance. I learned that I am persistent. I learned that my word is my promise and my commitment. Regardless of the challenges and obstacles I faced with my back injury, my professional commitments, my personal commitments as a mother and wife, and my ministry obligations, I learned the power of my strength to press on.

This doctoral journey was a long, arduous, yet rewarding experience for me. The work involved in this doctoral program was revelatory and quite involved. The research required commitment and in-depth engagement. Cultivating meaningful relationships required me to step outside of my comfort zone and solicit the support and help I needed to be successful.

I learned who I am, and I learned to affirm who I am in Christ Jesus. The God of all creation has many names, yet one of the most powerful names for God is “I Am.” I shall make the same bold declarations and do the same. I am not a quitter. I am a fighter. I am a dreamer. I am a visionary. I am a strategic thinker. I am a strategic planner. I am a creative influencer. I am a collaborator. I am a trusted community leader. I am a prophetic activist. I am a gospel preacher. I am called. I am chosen. I am God’s beloved.

Conclusion

Despite societal pressures and social distractions, Franklin's Black youth received Christian spiritual mentorship that successfully prepared them during their transition into adulthood after high school graduation. The faith-based organization, First New Birth Baptist Church Life Enrichment Center, with the culturally sensitive organization, Passion 4 Youth, Inc. (P4Y) promoted a mentorship program that mirrors the research solidified in the biblical, historical, theological, and interdisciplinary foundation chapters. From a biblical perspective, this mentorship program affirms the same power and wisdom of the Israelite community when training youth with proper character development and spiritual formation. Historically, the same communal power in community-based collaboration efforts during the Reconstruction Era in the Black community holds true with the implementation of this project in Franklin. Theologically, the Black youth in Franklin Township must remain centered around the liberating power of God through the lens of Black liberation, womanism, and the hermeneutics that Black lives matter to God. Lastly, from an interdisciplinary perspective, this project was informed by the Critical Race Theory within a sociological framework to understand how Franklin's Black youth know their voice and are empowered to use their voice for transformational change despite the systemic, dominant, and oppressive forces that are embedded within this society's systems and structures. The hypothesis was supported given the data collected and analyzed. The testimonials and feedback support the ongoing continuation of this project's work. As this project concludes, there are lessons learned, hopeful impacts to ministry, positive impacts to community, valuable changes for future projects, and important next steps.

Lessons Learned

There are lessons learned when taking on a strategic community project with great potential and vision. The proactive action research method emphasizes that the iterative project cycle is necessary to improve the outcome of the work. The results continue to shape the future trajectory of the project and informs the next implementation. The design of the program, the curriculum, the timing, transportation, location, and the venue were all points of consideration when evaluating lessons learned. The targeted age group and the project criteria required additional time to find and actively recruit participants. Nevertheless, the energy and time to find this invisible community is worth the effort. They are the next generation that will affect positive change for the Franklin Township community as socially and civically responsible citizens.

Ministry Impact

As a result of this project, ministry has evolved. First New Birth Baptist Church has extended the reach more formally by establishing the First New Birth Life Enrichment Center and naming me as the Executive Director. I have the role and responsibility to formalize the mission, vision, purpose, strategy, and goals for the Life Enrichment Center. I am being charged with shaping the Life Enrichment Center, which includes expanding the depth and breadth of this project into communities beyond Franklin Township.

There is an opportunity to expand the reach of the Life Enrichment Center and using the prophetic activism framework will ensure community-based collaboration. The focus will mirror the fundamental constructs of prophetic activism as illuminated in the

text in Luke 4, which is to proclaim the acceptable year of The Lord, preach the gospel to the poor, heal the brokenhearted, recover sight to the blind, proclaim liberty to those who are captive, and to set at liberty those who are oppressed.⁸ As a prophetic activist, I plan to use my voice to empower others to do the same and use their voice for change.

Community Impact

The net results of this project have proven to be positive and optimistic. The potential to reach more young adults who are in transition is viable and real. The opportunity to accelerate the expansion of the project in 2023 is plausible. There is a direct need with the Class of 2023 at the alternative high school that meets this project's criteria and will benefit young adults who will soon transition into adulthood.

There is an opportunity to repeat this project in four cycles in 2023. Each quarter a cohort can register for the empowerment sessions. The recruitment and registration processes will be simplified, and the lessons learned will be strongly considered. The community-based collaboration with other youth organizations will continue and grow stronger. The opportunity to network directly with the alternative high school, Road To Success, Franklin High School, the Franklin Youth Center, the Franklin Township Library, and Operation Great Expectations will have a significant impact on the life and momentum of this project.

⁸ Luke 4:18-19, New King James Version.

Valuable Changes for Future Projects

Should other researchers consider this project, there are potential changes to consider. The criteria that this is a six-week project is a potential change to reconsider. After the third week, participation dropped. The attention span for this age group may warrant the need to reduce the amount of time spent on each empowerment session. This generation is used to small bytes of information in a relatively short span of time. Their attention to details and time to focus on a subject appears to be limited. Therefore, a ninety-minute session every week over the course of a six-week period should be a change to consider. Also, incentives to promote the program among participants to invite and welcome their friends to attend is a potential consideration. Lastly, different criterion for the project to endorse the need for empowerment could be expanded beyond recent high school graduates. College bound youth could benefit from this project. Military bound youth could benefit from this project. Youth fifteen and older could benefit from learning how to use their voice to affect change also.

Next Steps

As this doctoral project and this doctoral program come to an end, the ministry journey must continue. The work of a prophetic activist never ends. The willingness to bring the saving grace and good news of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross personifying unconditional love for all humankind remains firm. The community must know that Jesus loves the community and came to bring hope to the community to affect transformational change. There is hope in this ministry work, and the hope begins with the power of my

voice to bring about a change in the communities I serve. This project work shall continue, and more young adults will be transformed. Out of one there will be many.

APPENDIX A
RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

BRIDGING THE GAP: PRE AND POST

Prophetic Activism Life Enrichment Project – Request for Feedback
Before Session 1 and After Session 6

Questionnaire for Participant # _____

1. If someone were to ask you who you are, how would you describe yourself to this person?

2. In assessing (or reviewing) your life, where are you currently? What are the major issues, concerns, and goals that you have currently set for your life? When answering this question, please indicate how these major issues, concerns, and goals impact your self-confidence, self-esteem, and self-worth.

3. What are the goals, both personal and professional, that you have set for yourself for the next five (5) years? The next ten (10) years? The next fifteen (15) years? life?

4. Are you familiar with the concept “Life Plan”? If so, what is your Life Plan?

5. What kind of training have you received regarding creating and utilizing a budget? When answering this question, please indicate whether you are currently utilizing a budget to govern your personal finances.

6. In reference to the previous question, how have you budgeted (i.e., planned) for savings, emergencies, and retirement?

7. Are you registered to vote? If yes, how have you exercised your right to vote? If no, why not?

8. In what ways do you currently volunteer within and/or give back to the community? If you are not currently volunteering within and/or giving back to the community, please indicate why that is so.

BRIDGING THE GAP: SESSIONS 1-6**Prophetic Activism Life Enrichment Project – Request for Feedback – 6 Sessions**

Questionnaire for Participant # _____

1. What did you learn today?

2. What concepts will you apply to your life now?

3. What did you hear today that is not realistic or confusing to you?

4. What will you do differently now and why?

5. What information should have been included in this session?

6. Do you have any questions or concerns?

7. Would you invite your friend to this session if this session were offered again? If yes, why? If no, why not?

8. How are you feeling? How is it with your soul?

BRIDGING THE GAP: PERSONAL INTERVIEW

Prophetic Activism Life Enrichment Project – Request for Feedback

DATE: _____ TIME: _____ INTERVIEWER: _____

One on One Personal Interview for Participant # _____

1. What did you decide to do after high school graduation?

2. What is your means of making income?

3. Do you live on your own, with a roommate, or with family?

4. What is your mode of transportation? What is your mode of communication?

5. What is your source of food each day?

6. What do you need to be successful in your career/job?

7. Did high school give you the tools to succeed? If yes, why? If no, what's needed?

8. We created a budget. Do you think you will be able to follow your budget? If yes, can you take care of your financial responsibilities? If no, what do you do to take care of your needs?

9. Are you a registered voter? Are you involved in giving back in Franklin? If yes, how so? How are you giving back to our community? What do you do?

10. What do you need to be successful and confident in your life after high school?

Thank you for participating in this interview. Your time is valuable, and you are greatly appreciated for sharing your thoughts and ideas with me. I want to reassure you that your responses during this interview will remain confidential. Again, thank you.

BRIDGING THE GAP: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION DURING SESSION 6

Prophetic Activism Life Enrichment Project – Request for Feedback

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How do you feel about life after high school and high school graduation?

2. Do you feel like life is harder now?

3. How do you feel about being an adult now?

4. If there is one thing you could change, what would it be?

5. Are you confident and comfortable with your life goals? What are you confident about? What are you scared of?

6. What do you need to be successful?

7. How do you feel about giving back to this community? What would you do? How would you like to give back?

8. What financial support and resources would be of benefit to you?

9. What worked well in this 6-week program? How did it impact you for the better? What was effective? Do you feel like this 6-week program gave you the tools that you need to succeed?

10. What needs to be improved about this 6-week program? What did not work? What do you suggest to improve the program? What was the most important information that you received?

Thank you again for participating in this research project. Your time is valuable, and your opinions, feedback, and dialogue are priceless. Again, I want to reassure you that your time with me will be held in confidence. I hope that you have enjoyed the meals during each session and the journal diary as a special gift on your spiritual journey. Thank you for staying committed to this six-week program. I am forever grateful for each one of you. Blessings.

APPENDIX B

INFORMED LETTER OF CONSENT

UNITED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY INFORMED CONSENT FORM TO BE PART OF A RESEARCH PROJECT

KEY INFORMATION ABOUT THE RESEARCHER AND THIS PROJECT

Project Title: PROPHETIC ACTIVISM: BRIDGING THE GAP FROM ADOLESCENCE TO ADULTHOOD THROUGH SPIRITUAL MENTORSHIP FOR BLACK YOUTH IN FRANKLIN TOWNSHIP

Principal Investigator: Catina Blackmon Jackson, BA, MAE, MDiv, United Theological Seminary, Doctoral Scholar in Cohort – Prophetic Activism: From the Cross to the Community

Faculty Mentor: D. Anthony Everett, DMin, United Theological Seminary

Faculty Advisor: Xavier Johnson, DMin, United Theological Seminary

This form contains information that will help you decide whether to join the project.

Key Information & Procedures

Things you should know:

- The purpose of this project is to implement a six-week project that will determine if this mentorship program effectively offers more guidance and additional support to support the transition from high school into adulthood and all the responsibilities that lie therein.
- If you choose to participate, you will be asked to:
 - attend a six-week life enrichment program starting May and ending in June
 - The six sessions will last no more than 1.5 hours each week. A meal will be served during each session for your convenience.
 - The location is 500 Elizabeth Avenue, Somerset, New Jersey. You must be able to provide your own transportation to and from the meeting location.
 - You will be asked to provide your thoughts, opinions, feedback, and ideas regarding your transition from graduating high school into adulthood in each session using questionnaires, focus group discussions, and one-on-one interviews.
- **Risks or Discomforts:** Any risks or discomforts from this research project could potentially include sharing your stories and ideas about how best to transition from childhood to adulthood with your peers in the conversations. However, your thoughts, opinions, and stories will remain anonymous in all research analysis and materials created by the Researcher/Principal Investigator and United Theological Seminary.
- **Direct Benefits:** There are no direct benefits for you to participate in this project. However, your participation will provide the feedback and support this program

needs to empower Franklin High School graduates who are not sure of their next steps in life if they do not attend college or military upon graduation.

Taking part in this research project is voluntary. You do not have to participate, and you can stop at any time. Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research project.

PURPOSE OF THIS PROJECT

The purpose of this project is to provide support and mentorship for young adults in Franklin Township using faith based (First New Birth Baptist Church (FNBBC)) and culturally sensitive community organizations (Passion 4 Youth, Inc. (P4Y)) to increase social and civic responsibilities who are not college or military bound as the next steps toward success after high school graduation. This six-week project will determine if this mentorship program effectively offers more guidance and additional support to support the transition from high school into adulthood and all the responsibilities that lie therein.

This mentoring program is designed to engage Black youth in civic duties, personal ethics, and socially responsible behavior. The outcome of this project will be a transformation in Franklin's youth that should produce spiritual empowerment, which will then provide economic empowerment and civic engagement as they transition from high school into empowered working citizens emboldened with self-confidence and a greater understanding of the importance of their social and civic responsibilities.

PARTICIPANTS IN THE PROJECT

Requirements for Participation:

You are invited to take part in this research project because you meet the following criteria:

- Recent high school graduate from Franklin High School (FHS) or a Resident of Franklin Township, Somerset, New Jersey
- Between the ages of 18 to 23
- Not enrolled in college or in the U.S. military

Number of Participants Expected: 7 to 10 will participate in this project

INFORMATION ABOUT PROJECT PARTICIPATION

Detailed Expectations in this project:

You will attend six sessions that will last no more than 1 ½ hours for six weeks:

- The location is 500 Elizabeth Avenue, Somerset, NJ 08873 (FHS)
- **May 26, 2022 - Session 1: Self-Empowerment: To Thine Own Self Be True**
 - Deliverable/Outcome: Share Your Story & Introduce yourself to the group
 - You will also complete a pre-project questionnaire
- **June 2, 2022 - Session 2: Personal Empowerment: Plan Your Work & Work Your Plan**
 - Deliverable/Outcome: Create Life Plan

- You will also complete a questionnaire to give feedback about this session
- **June 9, 2022 - Session 3: Professional Empowerment: Plan Your Work & Work Your Plan**
 - Deliverable/Outcome: Continue Building Life Plan
 - You will also complete a questionnaire to give feedback about this session
- **June 16, 2022 - Session 4: Economic Empowerment: Money Matters**
 - Deliverable/Outcome: Create a Budget and Financial Priority Life Plan
 - You will also complete a questionnaire to give feedback about this session
- **June 23, 2022 - Session 5: Spiritual Empowerment: You Matter Because Black Lives Matter**
 - Deliverable/Outcome: Life Coach & Spiritual Network
 - You will also complete a questionnaire to give feedback about this session
- **June 30, 2022 - Session 6: Focus Group Wrap-Up**
 - Deliverable/Outcome: Debrief on Impact and Effectiveness – Share your feedback in the group for future sessions & programming
 - You will also complete a post-project questionnaire
- **One-on-One Interviews:** Scheduled at your convenience during this six-week time frame to ask additional questions regarding this program and its effectiveness. Interviews can be scheduled at any time between May 30th to June 30th.

Time needed to take part in this project: You will be asked to attend a session each week during the months of May and June. The questionnaires will be completed during the weekly session. The focus group discussion will be completed during the last weekly session (Session 6). The one-on-one interviews will be scheduled with you at your convenience during the six-week period. The interview should take 15 to 30 minutes.

INFORMATION ABOUT PROJECT RISKS AND BENEFITS

Breach of confidentiality (i.e., informational risks) is a potential risk in all research that collects or maintains personally identifiable information and may be the only risk in some studies.

The researcher will try to minimize these risks by providing referrals for counseling services and counseling resources should any psychological, emotional, or spiritual risks occur during the six-week project.

You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer on any of the questionnaires, focus group discussions, and/or the one-on-one interview.

Because this project collects information about you, the primary risk of this research is a loss of confidentiality. See below for more information on how the project team will protect your confidentiality and privacy.

You may not receive any personal benefits from being in this project. However, others may benefit from the knowledge gained from this project.

Voluntariness:

Participation is voluntary and you may skip any questions you do not wish to answer. You can also stop participating at any time. Your decision to participate will have no impact on you and your decision not to participate will have no impact on you. If something makes you feel uncomfortable in any way while you are in this project, please contact me directly in person, on the phone, or electronic communication. My contact information is at the bottom of this consent form. You can refuse to respond to any or all the questions, and you will be able to withdraw from the process at any time.

Confidentiality:

We will be careful to keep your information confidential, and we will ask you and all the focus group members to keep the discussion confidential as well. There is always a small risk of unwanted or accidental disclosure. The conversations and the focus groups will be recorded and transcribed only with your permission. Any notes, recordings, or transcriptions will be kept private. The researcher will be the only one with access to your information. The files will be encrypted, and password protected. Your real name will not be used. You can decide whether you want the researcher to use a pseudo name for you. Recording devices will be used and they will be password protected. All communication will be used via my email or my cell phone – a phone call or text, which are all password protected.

ENDING THE PROJECT

You are free to leave this project at any time. If you leave the project before it is finished, there will be no penalty to you. If you decide to leave the project before it is finished, please tell one of the persons listed under the “Contact Information” section. If you choose to tell the researchers why you are leaving the project, your reasons may be kept as part of the project record. The researcher will keep the information collected about you for the research unless you ask me to delete it from my records.

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

No entities, organizations, or individuals will profit from this research project. This research project is solely for the partial fulfillment of the Doctor of Ministry program at United Theological Seminary.

PROTECTING AND SHARING RESEARCH INFORMATION

How the researchers protect my information:

We may disclose your information to the appropriate authorities if we suspect or learn about cases of child or elder abuse or neglect, or that you may harm yourself or others.

Only the researcher will have access to your information during this research project.

We will keep the information we collect about you during the research for five years per the seminary's data retention requirements. Your name and other information that can directly identify you will be stored securely and separately from the research information we collected from you.

We will not keep your name or other information that can identify you directly.

The results of this project could be published in an article or presentation but will not include any information that would let others know who you are.

We may use or share your research information for future research studies. If we share your information with other researchers, it will be de-identified, which means that it will not contain your name or other information that can directly identify you. This research may be like this project or completely different. We will not ask for your additional informed consent for these studies.

We would like to share your identifiable information with other researchers for future research. We will ask for your consent to do so at the end of this form. You can be a part of this current research project without agreeing to this future use of your identifiable information.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Summary: If you have any questions about the research project, please contact us as listed below.

Please contact the researchers listed below to:

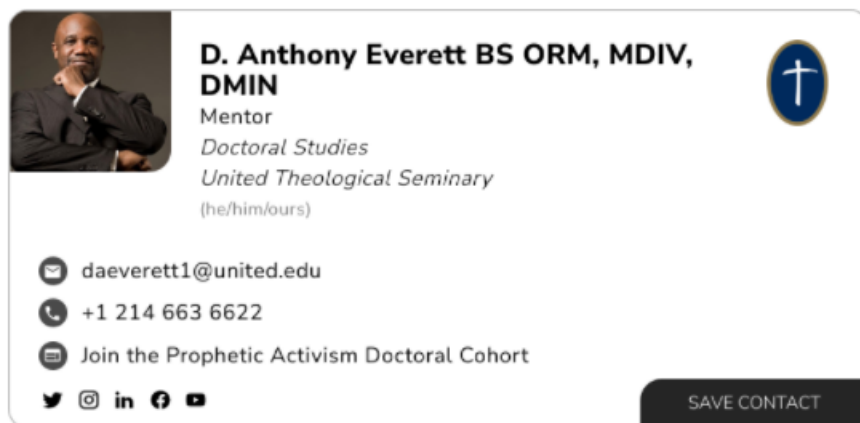
- Obtain more information about the project
- Ask a question about the project procedures
- Report an illness, injury, or other problem (you may also need to tell your regular doctors)
- Leave the project before it is finished
- Express a concern about the project

Principal Investigator: Rev. Catina Blackmon Jackson

Email: cbjackson2@united.edu

Phone: 732-986-5208

Faculty Mentor: Rev. Dr. D. Anthony Everett, BS ORM, MDIV, DMIN



If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, or wish to obtain information, ask questions, or discuss any concerns about this project with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact the following:

United Theological Seminary Institutional Review Board (UTS IRB)
 The Reverend Tolly A. Kennon, III, Esq., DMin.
 Adjunct Professor - Research Methods
 Organizational Approver
 United Theological Seminary
 4501 Denlinger Road
 Dayton, Ohio 45426
 Office: 937.529.2201
 Email: TAKennon1@United.edu
 www.united.edu

YOUR CONSENT

Consent to Participate in the Research Project

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this research project. Make sure you understand what the project is about before you sign.

Signing this paper means that you have read this and that you want to be in the project. If you do not want to be in the project, do not sign the paper. Being in the project is up to you; and no one will be upset or disappointed if you do not sign this paper or even if you change your mind later. You agree that you have been told about this project and why it is being done and what to do.

I will give you a copy of this document for your records, and I will keep a copy with the project records. If you have any questions about the project after you sign this document, you can contact the project team using the contact information provided above.

I understand what the project is about, and my questions so far have been answered. I agree to take part in this project.

Print Legal Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date of Signature (mm/dd/yy): _____

OPTIONAL CONSENT

Consent to use video recordings/audio recordings/photography for purposes of this research.

This project involves video recordings/audio recordings/photography. If you do not agree to be video recorded/audio recorded/photographed, you can still take part in the project.

_____ Yes, I agree to be video recorded/audio recorded/photographed.

_____ No, I do not agree to be video recorded/audio recorded/photographed.

Print Legal Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date of Signature (mm/dd/yy): _____

Consent to use of video recordings, audio recordings or photographs for publications, presentations or for educational purposes.

I give permission for audio recordings/video recordings/photographs made of me as part the research to be used in publications, presentations or for educational purposes.

_____ Yes

_____ No

Print Legal Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date of Signature (mm/dd/yy): _____

Consent to be Contacted for Participation in Future Research

Researchers may wish to keep your contact information to invite you to be in future research projects that may be similar or completely different from this research project.

_____ Yes, I agree for the researchers to contact me for future research projects.

_____ No, I do not agree for the researchers to contact me for future research projects.

APPENDIX C
RECRUITMENT FLYERS



FNBBC Life Enrichment Center - In partnership with Passion 4 Youth Presents

Get EMPOWERED!

We are looking for a small team of young adults to join our 6-week program! Please see below for our eligibility requirements.

- ✓ 18-23 years old
- ✓ graduate of Franklin High School or Franklin township resident
- ✓ not enrolled in school or military
- ✓ looking for tools to be successful as you transition to adulthood

Join the movement!
<https://fnbbc.org/enrichment>

Scan here to let us know you want to get empowered!



Credit: Creative Deck - Joy Peters

FNBBC Life
Enrichment
Center - In
partnership with
Passion 4 Youth
Presents

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Join the movement!
<https://fnbbc.org/enrichment>

Scan here to let us know you want to get empowered!



Credit: Creative Deck - Joy Peters

FNBBC Life Enrichment Center- In Partnership with Passion 4 Youth Presents

NAVIGATING LIFE: GET EMPOWERED

We are looking for a small team of young adults to join our 6-week program!



ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

- 18-23 years old
- graduate of Franklin High School or Franklin Township Resident
- not enrolled in school or military
- looking for tools to be successful as you transition into adulthood

TIME COMMITMENT & PERKS

- Once a week sessions starting Thursday, May 26th til June 30th, 6:30pm -8pm
- DINNER will be provided at every session
- Skills that you can use in any setting!
- NO COST TO YOU!!

**JOIN THE MOVEMENT COME TO BE HEARD, INSPIRED,
ENCOURAGED & MOTIVATED !!**
VISIT [HTTPS://FNBBC.ORG/ENRICHMENT](https://fnbbc.org/enrichment)



SCAN HERE



APPENDIX D
LESSONS PLANS

SESSION 1: TO THINE OWN SELF BE TRUE

SUBJECT	FACILITATOR	DATE	TOTAL TIME
Self-Empowerment	Catina Jackson	May 26, 2022	1.5 Hours

OVERVIEW

- To make introductions – the group and facilitator
- To share an overview of this 6-week project
- To understand and share who they are

TIME	ACTIVITY
5 MINUTES	Opening Meditation / Spiritual Affirmation
5 MINUTES	Centering Activity
30 MINUTES	Introduce Myself / Share Purpose / Project Overview
25 MINUTES	Pre-Project Questionnaire
20 MINUTES	Share Introductions
5 MINUTES	Closing Meditation / Share Expectations for Session 2

NOTES:

SESSION 2: PLAN YOUR WORK & WORK YOUR PLAN

SUBJECT	FACILITATOR	DATE	TOTAL TIME
Personal Empowerment	Catina Jackson	June 2, 2022	1.5 Hours

OVERVIEW

- To articulate 3 personal development goals
- To understand the importance of work life balance
- To create a Life Plan as coined by Shanel Y. Robinson

TIME	ACTIVITY
5 MINUTES	Opening Meditation / Spiritual Affirmation
5 MINUTES	Centering Activity
10 MINUTES	Pearls of Wisdom for Life
10 MINUTES	Defining a Life of Purpose
15 MINUTES	Prioritizing What Matters to You
30 MINUTES	Create a Life Plan – Begin the Process
10 MINUTES	Feedback Questionnaire
5 MINUTES	Closing Meditation / Share Expectations for Session 3

NOTES:

SESSION 3: PLAN YOUR WORK & WORK YOUR PLAN

SUBJECT	FACILITATOR	DATE	TOTAL TIME
Professional Empowerment	Catina Jackson	June 9, 2022	1.5 Hours

OVERVIEW

- To develop 3 professional development goals
- To affirm your professional purpose and plan
- To continue building a Life Plan as coined by Shanel Y. Robinson

TIME	ACTIVITY
5 MINUTES	Opening Meditation / Spiritual Affirmation
5 MINUTES	Centering Activity
10 MINUTES	3 Keys to Professional Success
10 MINUTES	Defining a Career with Purpose
15 MINUTES	Prioritizing What Matters to You
30 MINUTES	Create a Life Plan – Continue the Process
10 MINUTES	Feedback Questionnaire
5 MINUTES	Closing Meditation / Share Expectations for Session 4

NOTES:

Deliverable/Outcome: Create Life Plan *coined by Shanel Y. Robinson*

SESSION 4: MONEY MATTERS

SUBJECT	FACILITATOR	DATE	TOTAL TIME
Economic Empowerment	Catina Jackson	June 16, 2022	1.5 Hours

OVERVIEW

- To create a Budget
- To create a Financial Priority Life Plan as coined by Shanel Y. Robinson
- To understand the importance of a financial legacy and investing in community

TIME	ACTIVITY
5 MINUTES	Opening Meditation / Spiritual Affirmation
5 MINUTES	Centering Activity
10 MINUTES	Importance of Budgets
10 MINUTES	Importance of Savings
15 MINUTES	Importance of Paying It Forward: Legacy & Community
30 MINUTES	Create a Budget & Financial Planning Goals Life Plan
10 MINUTES	Feedback Questionnaire
5 MINUTES	Closing Meditation / Share Expectations for Session 5

NOTES:

SESSION 5: YOU MATTER BECAUSE BLACK LIVES MATTER

SUBJECT	FACILITATOR	DATE	TOTAL TIME
Spiritual Empowerment	Catina Jackson	June 23, 2022	1.5 Hours

OVERVIEW

- To affirm your self-value and self-worth
- To be confident in your life's purpose and know there is a divine purpose and plan
- To trust your spiritual network and life coaches to support your transition

TIME	ACTIVITY
5 MINUTES	Opening Meditation / Spiritual Affirmation
5 MINUTES	Centering Activity
10 MINUTES	A Divine Purpose
10 MINUTES	A Divine Plan
15 MINUTES	Spiritual Connections: Importance of a Wellness Team (Professionals & Mentors & Life Coaches)
30 MINUTES	Spiritual Empowerment Affirmations & Techniques
10 MINUTES	Feedback Questionnaire
5 MINUTES	Closing Meditation / Share Expectations for Session 6

NOTES:

Deliverable/Outcome: Life Coach & Spiritual Network

Deliverable/Outcome: Create Life Plan *coined by Shanel Y. Robinson*

SESSION 6: FOCUS GROUP WRAP-UP

SUBJECT	FACILITATOR	DATE	TOTAL TIME
Final Debrief	Catina Jackson	June 30, 2022	1.5 Hours

OVERVIEW

- To provide feedback about this project and the sessions
- To share the impact this project had on your life
- To offer additional ideas to strengthen this program for Franklin youth

TIME	ACTIVITY
5 MINUTES	Opening Meditation / Spiritual Affirmation
5 MINUTES	Centering Activity
10 MINUTES	Feedback
10 MINUTES	Impact
10 MINUTES	Additional Ideas
30 MINUTES	Focus Group Interview
10 MINUTES	Post-Project Questionnaire
10 MINUTES	Closing Meditation / Final Goodbyes

NOTES:

Deliverable/Outcome: Debrief on impact and effectiveness and share feedback for future sessions and programming.

APPENDIX E

THANK YOU LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS

Rev. Catina Blackmon Jackson
 Somerset, New Jersey
 732-986-5208
 revcatinajackson@gmail.com

FNBBC LIFE ENRICHMENT PROJECT

Rev. Catina B. Jackson
 Doctoral Candidate
 United Theological Seminary
 Dayton, Ohio
 cbjackson2@united.edu

June 30, 2022

Dear Participants,

I want to thank you again for participating in my research project and sharing your experiences, feedback, interview responses, and opinions with me during this six-week project.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to reach out to me directly. You may also direct your questions to Coach Audrey Taylor, or you may contact Rev. Dr. D. Anthony Everett as noted below.



**D. Anthony Everett BS ORM, MDIV,
 DMIN**

Mentor

Doctoral Studies

United Theological Seminary

(he/him/ours)

✉ daeverett1@united.edu

☎ +1 214 663 6622

✉ Join the Prophetic Activism Doctoral Cohort

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SAVE CO

Sincerely,

Reverend Catina Blackmon Jackson

Doctoral Candidate – Prophetic Activism:
 From the Cross to the Community Cohort

APPENDIX F

PASSION 4 YOUTH GATEKEEPER PERMISSION LETTER

PASSION 4 YOUTH, INC. (P4Y)

Audrey Taylor

Founder & CEO

500 Elizabeth Avenue

Somerset, NJ 08873

info@passion4youth.org

February 15, 2022

Dear Rev. Dr. D. Anthony Everett and United
Theological Seminary IRB Committee,

This letter serves as official permission for Rev. Catina Blackmon Jackson to conduct a research project entitled PROPHETIC ACTIVISM: BRIDGING THE GAP FROM ADOLESCENCE TO ADULTHOOD THROUGH SPIRITUAL MENTORSHIP FOR BLACK YOUTH IN FRANKLIN TOWNSHIP with the youth who are affiliated with Passion 4 Youth, Inc. (P4Y).

I have met with Catina and understand that this research study will include several different aspects. She will facilitate six sessions and make observations gathering feedback. Catina will also conduct one-on-one interviews with each participant so that she can learn and support young adults' transition into adulthood.

I understand the project will begin May 2022 and end in June 2022 over a six-week period. The 6 sessions will be held for no more than 90 minutes each week over the course of six weeks. Catina has made it clear that all participants will be given a choice whether they would like to participate in this research project. I also understand that Catina will offer participants ages 18 – 23 informed consent letters to sign before they agree to participate in this six-week research project.

In summary, I am fully informed about and give Rev. Catina Blackmon Jackson official approval to conduct her research project with Passion 4 Youth, Inc. (P4Y). If you have any questions, feel free to email me at ataylor@passion4youth.org.

Sincerely,

Coach Audrey Taylor

Founder & CEO ~ Passion 4 Youth, Inc. (P4Y)

APPENDIX G

LIFE PLAN AND FINANCIAL PLAN WORKSHEETS

MY LIFE PLAN

2022

Financial

Work/Career

Family

Social

MY LIFE PLAN

2022

Fun/Travel/Recreation

Health/Fitness

Community

Spiritual

MY FINANCIAL LIFE PLAN

2022

MONTHLY INCOME:

MONTHLY EXPENSES:

HOUSING

UTILITIES

FOOD

CLOTHING

TRANSPORTATION

COMMUNICATION

INSURANCE

PERSONAL ITEMS

ENTERTAINMENT

TRAVEL

IMPORTANT PRIORITIES:

PERSONAL SAVINGS

EMERGENCY SAVINGS

RETIREMENT SAVINGS

CHARITABLE GIFTS & COMMUNITY DONATIONS

FINANCIAL GOALS & PRIORITIES:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

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